夏の夜、炎の光に照らされ
出たらが踊りだしているように
ラーメンが集まり出した。
彼らは静かに死をまとわりながら炎に飛び込んでいく。
その炎は最初の日から絶やされる事なく、一人の業火。
火炎の中で不敵に微笑むひとりの白髪の少年、アカギ。
誰に神経質の男と呼ばれ、裏社会に君臨する男――
あの赤オレ!!

アカギ

福本伸行

AKAGI ● Nobuyuki Fukumoto
Kindai Mahjong Comics

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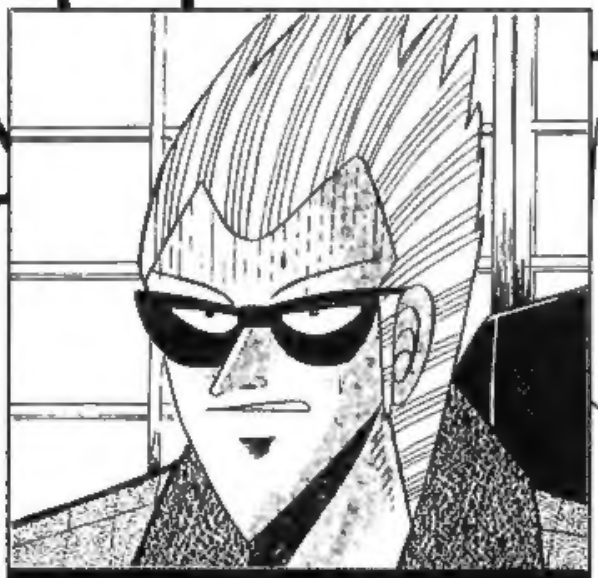
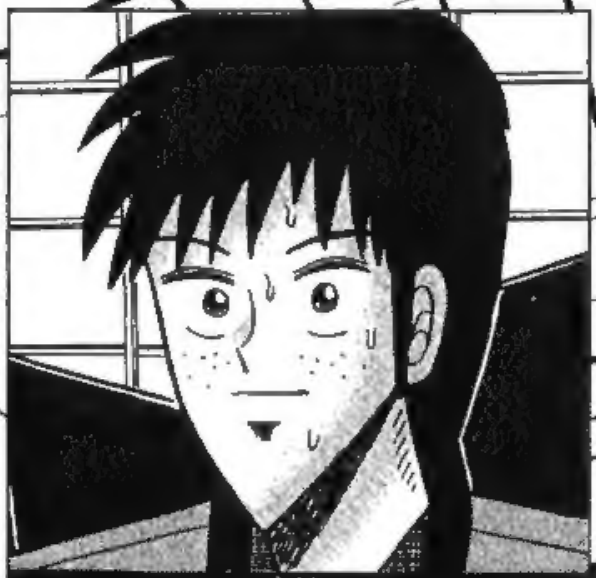


ニセアカギ

並外れた記憶力と雀力を持つが、浦部の前に脆くも崩れ去った。



治

アカギと同じ工場で働いていた少年。アカギに惚れ込み、ついてきた。

登場人物紹介

前巻までのあらすじ

昭和33年。生命を賭けたヤクザとの麻雀勝負に敗れつつあった南郷を助けた13歳の少年。彼こそ後に裏の麻雀界に君臨することになる赤木しげるであった。特に、盲目の雀士・市川を破った夜は、伝説と化した。しかし、直後に赤木は姿を消し、5年余りが経った…。そして昭和39年。最初の伝説の夜に立ち合った不良刑事・安岡によるニセアカギ売り込みが、第二の伝説の幕を開いた……。

巧みに倍プッシュ勝負に持ち込んだ藤沢組代打ち・浦部を異端の戦略で打ち破り、赤木は再び姿を消す。

しかしその直後、噂を聞きつけて治と赤木の前に現れた麻雀打ち・仲井。その半荘1回有り金勝負で、仲井は赤木から親満を直撃。しかし、赤木は仲井たちの連携プレー〝通し〟を見抜いていた……！

仲井

アカギの金と箔づけを狙って、用意周到な罠を仕掛ける麻雀打ち

安岡

アカギの伝説を利用し、川田組にニセアカギを売り込んだ不良刑事

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◉近代麻雀平成8年1月号～平成9年6月号所載

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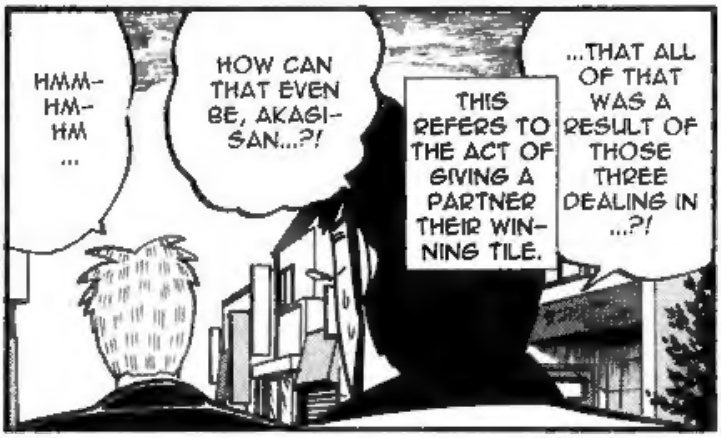
第55話 通し

CHAPTER 55 - SIGNALS

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT ...?!
WHA ...
はん


HMM-HM-HM ...
HOW CAN THAT EVEN BE, AKAGI-SAN...?!
THIS REFERS TO THE ACT OF GIVING A PARTNER THEIR WIN-NING TILE.
...THAT ALL OF THAT WAS A RESULT OF THOSE THREE DEALING IN ...?!

YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT HIS TSUMO WIN ...
...AS WELL AS THE TIME THAT HE GOT YOU TO DEAL IN...

ALL THEY NEED TO DO IT IS THE EASIEST OF ALL EASY CHEATING TECHNIQUES.
.....

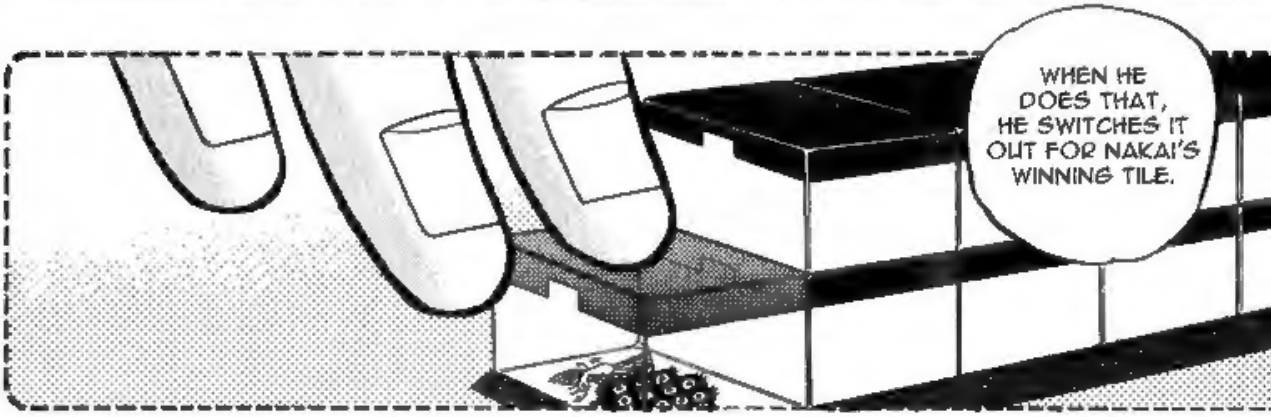
IT'S ACTUALLY QUITE SIMPLE... VERY SIMPLE, IN FACT.
.....

HUH ...?
ANY AMATEUR OFF THE STREET COULD DO IT WITH A LITTLE BIT OF PRACTICE.

OF COURSE, OF COURSE!
I'LL TAKE TWO HI-LITES.
HAVE A NICE DAY, SIR!
……

THEY MAKE USE OF THE BLIND SPOT THAT COMES IN THE FORM OF THE NEXT DRAW WHEN THEY CALL BACK AND FORTH LIKE THAT …
THAT'S WHERE THEIR POWER LIES.
OSAMU, YOU REMEMBER HOW THEY WERE CALLING BACK AND FORTH SO FAST FOR THE PAST FEW GAMES, RIGHT?
YEAH …
……
IT'S A COMBI-NATION PLAY.
……

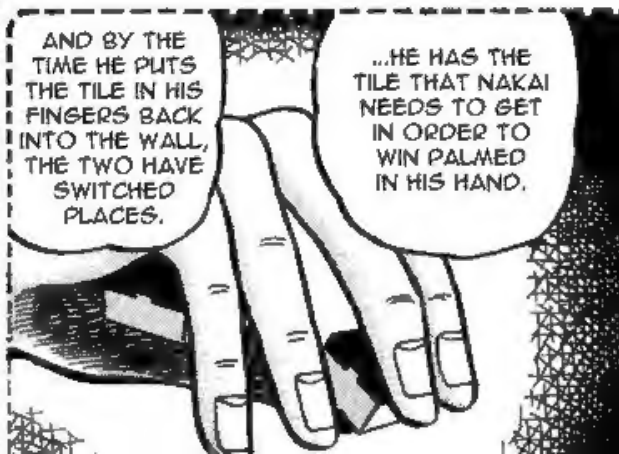
...WOULD ALWAYS RETURN THE TILE HE DREW TO THE WALL, AS I'M SURE YOU RECALL.
...THE PLAYER TO HIS RIGHT, WHOSE TURN TO DRAW CAME NEXT AFTER NAKAI...
WHEN THE PLAYER TO NAKAI'S LEFT WOULD CALL THE TILE THAT NAKAI PLAYED AFTER A RIICHI...
PON!


WHEN HE DOES THAT, HE SWITCHES IT OUT FOR NAKAI'S WINNING TILE.

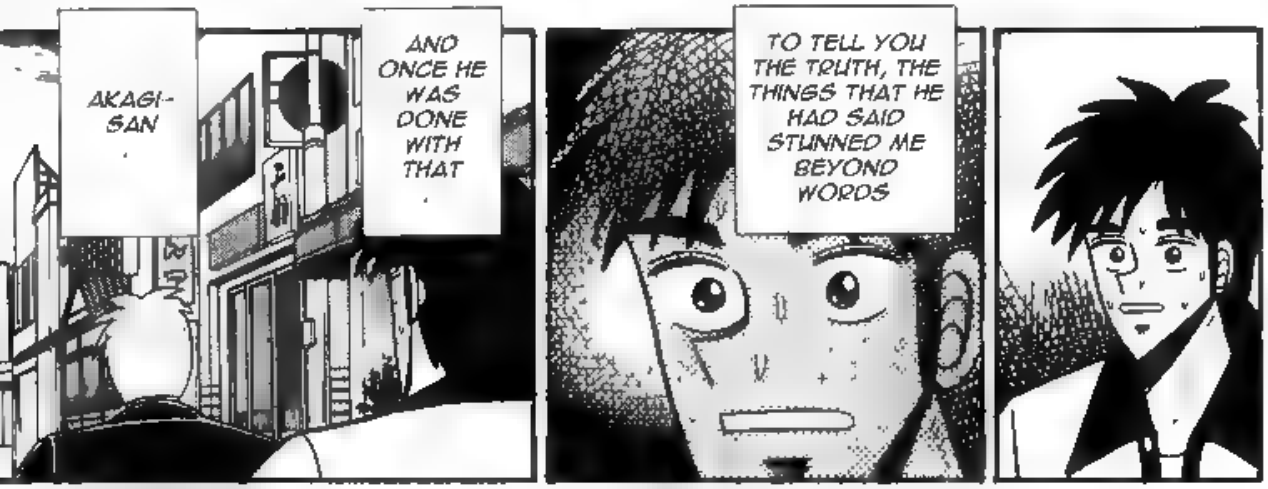
THAT IS, IF HE CALLS ON THE TILE THAT COMES OUT OF THE HAND OF THE OTHER TEAMMATE ...
AND BY USING THE SAME EXACT TRICK, IF THE TILE-SWITCHER THEN CALLS PON...
NAKAI'S WINNING TILE THAT HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SWITCHED OUT...

SINCE THE PLAYER LEFT OF NAKAI CALLED ...
IT'S A VERY EASY AND SIMPLE SLEIGHT OF HAND.
THAT TILE IS SHIFTED OVER TO HIM...
AND SO HE GETS HIS TSU-MO.

IN THE MOMENT THAT HE DRAWS HIS TILE ...
WHA ...?


AND BY THE TIME HE PUTS THE TILE IN HIS FINGERS BACK INTO THE WALL, THE TWO HAVE SWITCHED PLACES.
...HE HAS THE TILE THAT NAKAI NEEDS TO GET IN ORDER TO WIN PALMED IN HIS HAND.

YEAH ...
NOW, WASN'T THAT SIMPLE?
SINCE I WAS IN RICHI, I HAD TO DEAL IT
.. INSTEAD GOES TO ME, AS IT DID IN THE ROUND WE LEFT OFF ON


AKAGI-SAN .
AND ONCE HE WAS DONE WITH THAT .
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, THE THINGS THAT HE HAD SAID STUNNED ME BEYOND WORDS

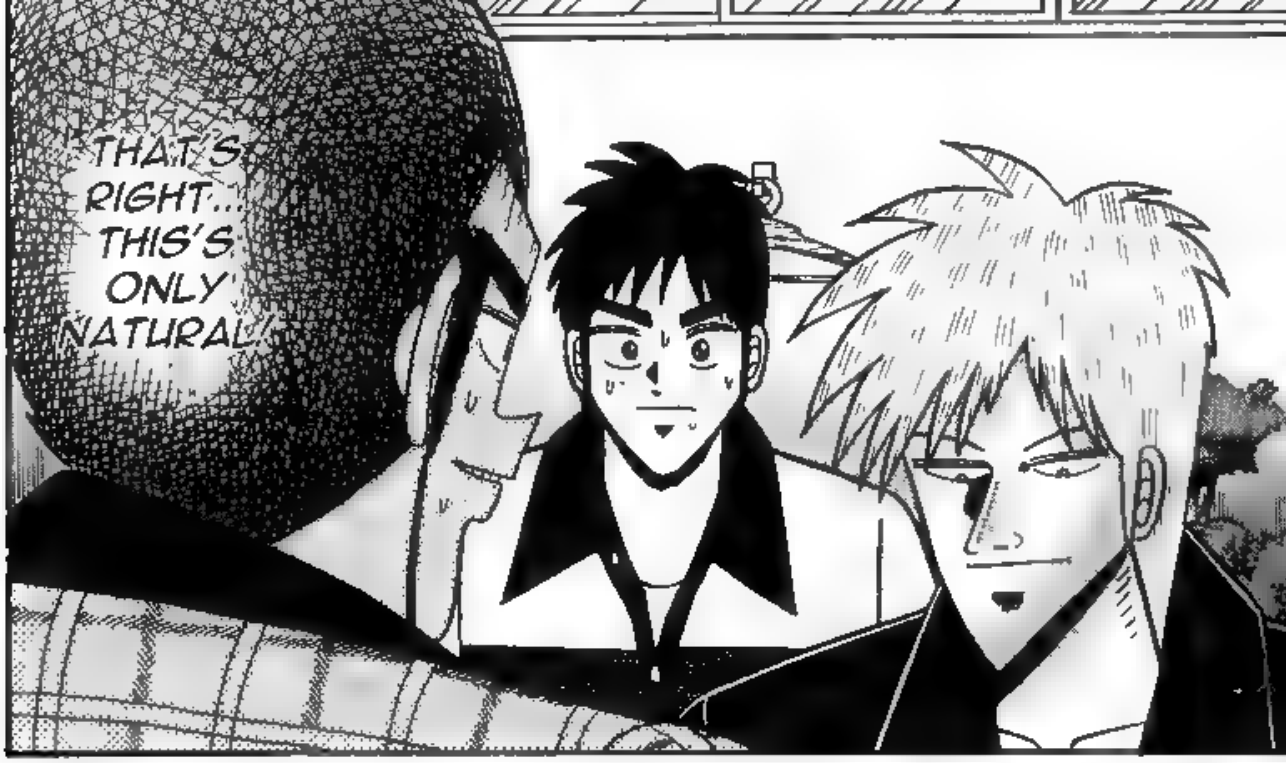
. IT ALL SEEMED SO PERFECT, THAT EVEN AFTER I'D HEARD ALL ABOUT IT...
ONCE I UNDER-STOOD HOW THEY DID IT. .
FOR THIS, TOO . .
.....
I WAS STILL LEFT IN STUNNED SILENCE
.WHAT SIGNALS THEY USE AND THINGS LIKE THAT, BUT...
. .TOLD ME ABOUT HOW THEY COMMU-NICATE WITH EACH OTHER .
ミッキー食堂

ざわ・
ざわ・
AND THAT HE WOULD PULL OFF A CHAIN OF SUCCESSIVE VICTORIES.
BUT EVEN STILL, HE SAID THAT HE WOULDN'T LOSE.
THERE'S ONLY 5 MORE ROUNDS UNTIL THIS SINGLE-HANCHAN MATCH ENDS
IF HE CAN'T BEAT THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF THE THREE OF THEM
BUT STILL, EVEN IF THOSE SIGNALS ARE OBVIOUS AND PREDICTABLE
IT WILL STILL BE ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM LOSE THIS
RIICHI!
REGARDING THE PARTNER'S SIGNALS
WHAT AKAGI-SAN SAID TO ME AT THAT TIME
A RAP OFF FROM FLAWLESS METHODS
EXTREMELY ROUGH
THEIR TECHNIQUES WOULD PROVE TO BE
WAS THAT, AS THE BATTLE WORE ON
...MORE LIKE THE TOOLS OF AMATEURS
THE BATTLE RESUMES.

FIRST, WHEN HE TURNS HIS DISCARD SIDEWAYS TO CALL RIICHI .
AKAGI-SAN SAID THAT THERE'S TWO THINGS HE DOES TO SIGNAL TO HIS FRIENDS
WHEN NAKAI DOES RIICHIS ..
THAT'S IT...!
SO THE FIRST SIGNAL DESCRIBES WHAT SUIT HE'S WAI-TING ON.
AND IF IT'S PULLED DOWN TOWARDS HIM, THAT MEANS PINZU
IF HE LEAVES IT IN THE MIDDLE, THAT MEANS SOUZU
IF HE PUSHES IT UP TO THE TOP ROW, THAT MEANS IT'S A MANZU WAIT
IF HE DISCARDS AT THE SAME TIME HE THROWS THE STICK ON THE TABLE..
..THAT MEANS HIS WAIT IS ON 2, 5, OR 8.
...AND THEN THROWS THE RIICHI STICK OUT .
IF HE DIS-CARDS THE TILE FIRST ...
. THAT MEANS THAT HIS WAIT IS ON 1, 4, AND 7.
ONCE HE'S DECLARED RIICHI AND NEEDS TO THROW THE 1000 POINT RIICHI STICK ON THE TABLE
AND THE SEC-OND THING IS...
...THE TIMING FOR HIM PUTTING IT DOWN DESCRIBES WHAT NUMBERS IT IS

THIS RIICHI HE'S MADE WITH THE TON ...
SO WITH ALL OF THAT IN MIND. .
. THAT MEANS HE'S WAITING ON 3, 6, OR 9.
IF HE TOSSES THE STICK OUT AND THEN DISCARDS THE TILE...
2-5-8 MAN, HUH..
AND SINCE THE TILE HE USED TO RIICHI IS PUSHED UP TO THE ROW ABOVE IT, IT'S A MANZU WAIT...
SO THAT MEANS THAT IT'S 2, 5, OR 8 ...
IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, HE DID BOTH OF THEM AT THE SAME TIME...
RON!
IT'S 5-8 MAN ...?
AND SINCE THERE'S A 2-MAN IN HIS DIS-CARDS ALREADY .

ANYONE COULD DO WHAT HE JUST DID!
WITH THREE PEOPLE BANGING UP ON ONE PERSON...
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT HE'S CAUGHT UP TO US WITH THIS, BUT ...
...WHAT'S HE GETTING SO DAMN PROUD FOR?
DOESN'T MATTER HOW CHEAP THE HAND IS..
WELL, WELL... AIN'T THIS JUST GREAT? IT'S FANTASTIC!
HNN - HN - HN ...
...THE DIFFERENCE 'TWEEN ME 'N' AKASHI-SAN IS JUST 1300!
WITH THIS 9600 POINTS ...
HNN - HN ...
..IF ONLY UP TO THIS POINT.
HE REALLY CAN SAY THAT THINGS ARE GETTING BETTER AND BETTER FOR HIM.
IT'S TRUE THAT THAT BASTARD IS REALLY TAKING AKASHI-SAN TO THE BANK.
BUT... EVEN THOUGH IT'S DISGRACEFUL...
THIS GUY ...
HMM-HM-HM ...
AIN'T THAT RIGHT?
WITH THIS WIN IT LOOKS LIKE I'M FINALLY RIGHT ON YOUR TAIL!
IT WAS A LONG WAY TO COME, BUT..


THAT'S RIGHT... THIS'S ONLY NATURAL!

I THINK HE MIGHT HAVE DISCOVERED OUR CRAFTY COORDINATION ALREADY .
BUT EVEN SO .
THOUGH, I AM CATCHING A WHIFF OF SOME-THING..
THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO WHEN YOU'RE UP AGAINST THREE PEOPLE BY YOURSELF ..!
THAT'S JUST HOW THE WORLD GOES 'ROUND AKAGI-HAN!

JUST SPRINTING AND SPRINTING .
THE WAY THINGS ARE NOW, HE'S SPRINTING ...
SO IN THAT CASE .
HE'S GOT NO PROOF THAT WE'RE TEAMIN' UP RIGHT HERE!
IT'S STILL JUST A SUSPICION, SO HE'S NOT TO-TALLY CERTAIN .
HE CAN'T REALLY COMPLAIN 'BOUT WHAT WE'RE DOIN' YET!
THE WAY THINGS ARE FOR HIM AT THE MOMENT .

YOU GOTTA CHARGE STRAIGHT AT 'EM!
IT'S JUST A ONE-HANCHAN BATTLE.
SO THINKIN' THINGS THROUGH WON'T HELP A BIT!
YOU'VE GOTTA BE AGRES-SIVE!
TRYIN' TO GET AWAY AS FAST AS 'IS LEGS CAN CARRY 'IM!
BUT SINCE I'VE GOT A 1-MAN IN MY DIS-CARDS
AND IT'S MANZU, MAKIN' IT 1-4-7 MAN!
MY WAIT IS ON 1-4-7!
RIICHI!
NOT SO FAST, NAKAI.
I TELL YA, THIS'S REALLY TOO MUCH LUCK FOR ONE PERSON TO -
WHAT'S THAT, A 4-MAN?
HMMM?
.....
IT'S 4-7 MAN!
I'LL TAKE THAT.

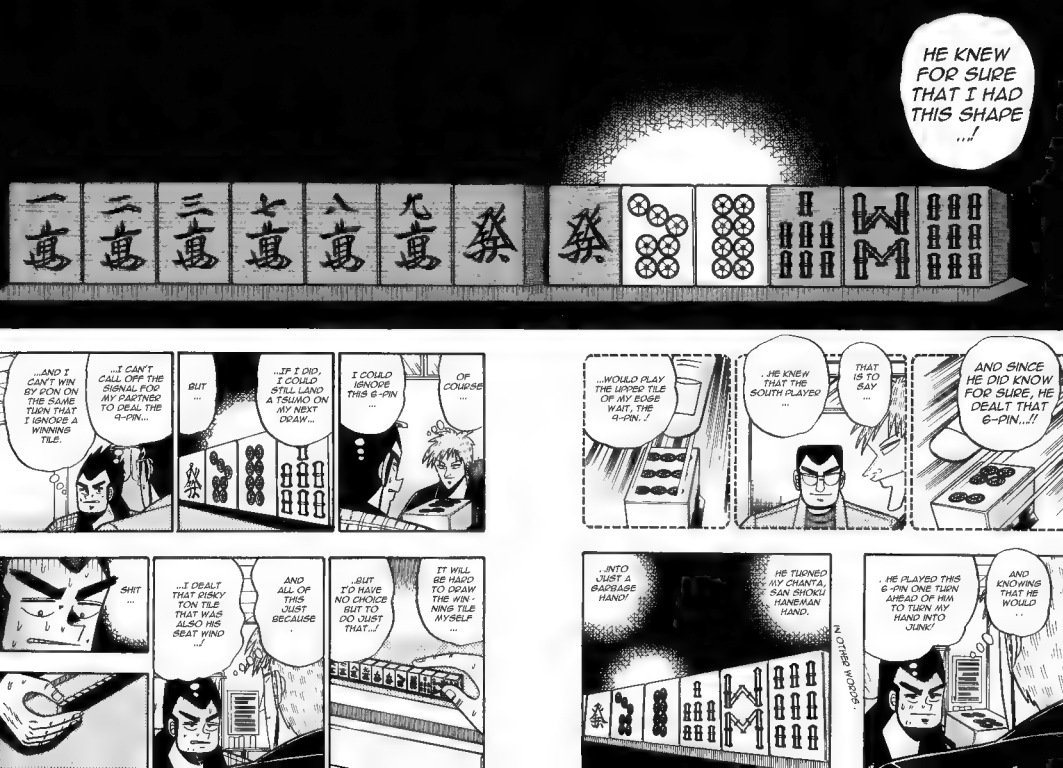
FANPAI, DORA 3.
ATAMA HANE.
MANGAN.
.....
NO ...
OUR SIGNALS ..?!?!
HAS HE FIGURED THEM OUT..?!
NO WAY.. DID HE..
HMM-HM ...
GH ...!!
HE WON THAT HAND ...
... BRINGING IT TO THE SOUTH SET.
NAKAI SHAKES OFF THIS THOUGHT.
IT SHOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE ..
IT'S NOT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO HAVE DONE THAT.
WE'RE STILL ONLY IN THE EAST SET ...
HE FORCIBLY HAD HIS HAND DEALT INTO VIA SIGNALS
AND IN THE EAST 4TH ROUND, TOO
HE PREVENTED HIMSELF FROM FALLING INTO THE SWAMP OF SUSPICION ...

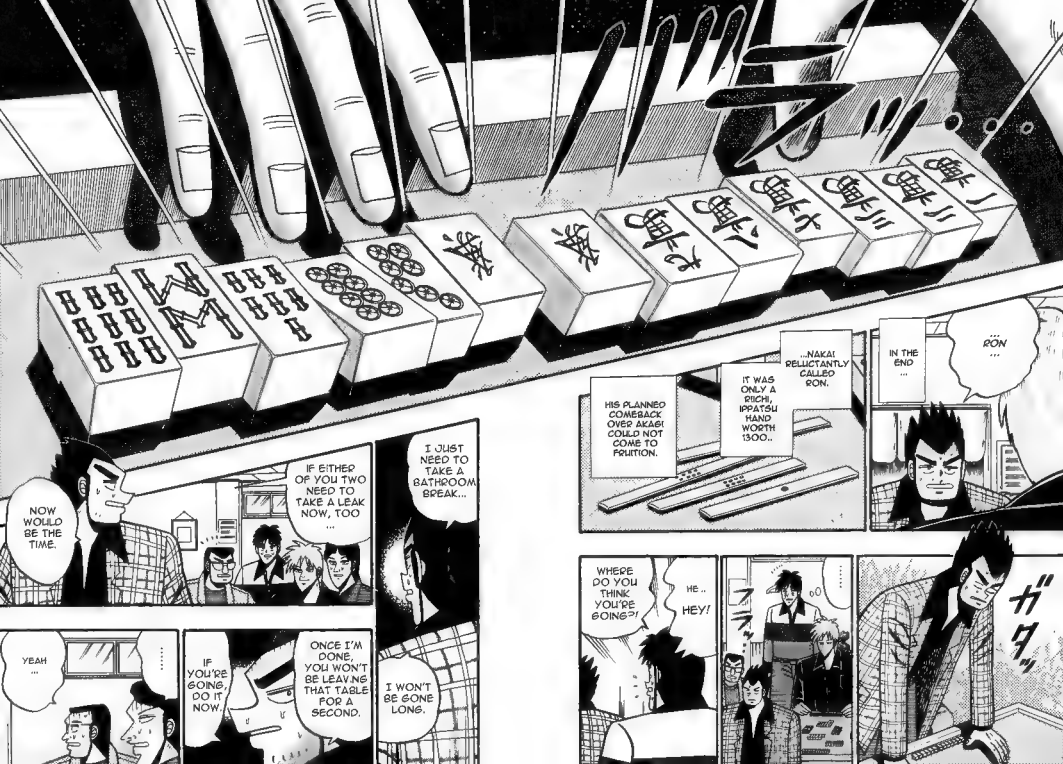
IT IS NOW THE SOUTH 1ST ROUND.
HE IS IN TENPAI FOR A CHANTA, SAN SHOKU HAND.
NAKAI'S HAND IS IN GOOD SHAPE.
AS PER USUAL ...
14 TURNS IN.
ALL RIGHT
...IT WOULD BE HANEMAN.
IF HE GOT HIS PARTNER TO DEAL INTO HIS HAND ON THE NEXT TURN..
WITH RIICHI AND IPPATSU ON TOP ...

AT THE MOMENT, THE GUY TO MY LEFT HAS THE TILE THAT WILL TAKE MY HAND TO HANEMAN...
THE 9-PIN.
FOR THE TIME BEING, AKAGI DOESN'T SEEM AS THOUGH HIS HAND IS IN TENPAI AT THE MOMENT ...
BUT UNLIKE LAST TIME, WE DON'T HAVETA WORRY ABOUT AN ATAMA HANE
WITH ALL'A THAT .
MY COMEBACK CAN BE COMPLETE!
THE ONLY PROBLEM I'VE GOT ..
...IS THIS TON
THIS TON IS OF AKAGI'S SEAT WIND, AND IT'S A LIVE TILE.
BUT EVEN SO .
I'VE GOTTA MAKE IT PASS!!
RIICH!
.....
HMM-HM ..
PON.

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF HE CALLS.
THAT'S FINE. NO PROB!
HNN-HN.
.....
NO PROBLEM AT ALL!
...CAN END IT ALL WITH HIS 9-PIN!
ON 'IS NEXT TURN, MY BUDDY OVER HERE
AS LONG AS IT'S NOT A RON..
I'VE MADE MY COME-BACK!

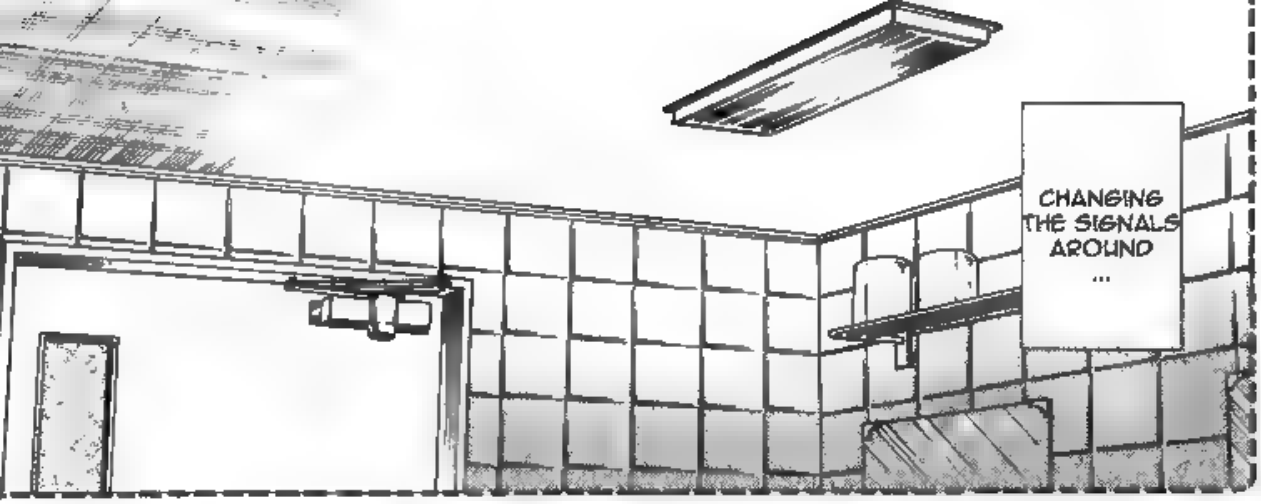
THE GRIP IN HIS HAND COULD WIN OFF A HAT
HE'S REALLY SEEN RIGHT THROUGH IT
.....
THIS GUY!!!
THIS GUY ...
IT'S NOT JUST OUR SIGNALS ...
... NO ...!
HE KNOWS ALL OF OUR SIGNALS..!!

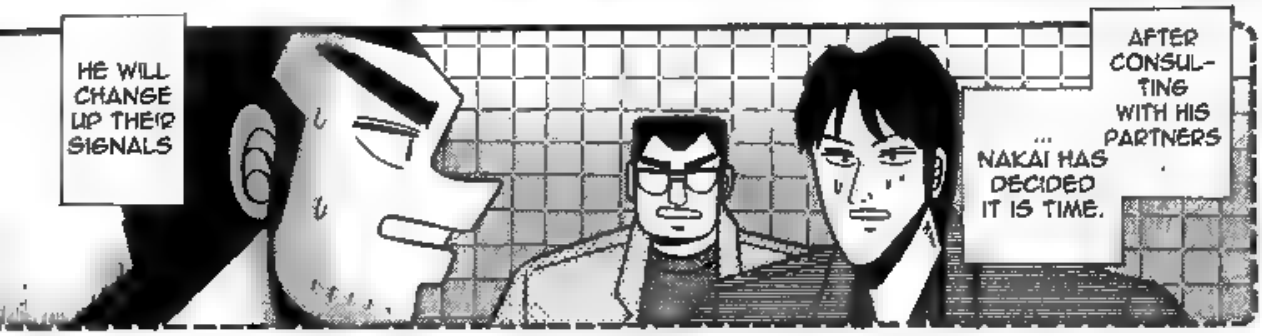

HE KNEW FOR SURE THAT I HAD THIS SHAPE ...!
...AND I CAN'T WIN BY RON ON THE SAME TILE THAT I IGNORE A WINNING TILE.
...I CAN'T CALL OFF THE SIGNAL FOR MY PARTNER TO DEAL THE 9-PIN...
BUT ...
...IF I DID, I COULD STILL LAND A TSUMO ON MY NEXT DRAW...
I COULD IGNORE THIS 6-PIN ...
OF COURSE ...
...WOULD PLAY THE UPPER TILE OF MY EDGE WAIT, THE 9-PIN. !
. HE KNEW THAT THE SOUTH PLAYER ...
THAT IS TO SAY ...
AND SINCE HE DID KNOW FOR SURE, HE DEALT THAT 6-PIN...!
SHIT ...
...I DEALT THAT RISKY TON TILE THAT WAS ALSO HIS SEAT WIND ...!
AND ALL OF THIS JUST BECAUSE .
...BUT I'D HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DO JUST THAT...!
IT WILL BE HARD TO DRAW THE WINNING TILE MYSELF ...
. INTO JUST A GARBAGE HAND!
HE TURNED MY CHANTA, SAN SHOKU HANEMAN HAND.
IN OTHER WORDS,
. HE PLAYED THIS 6-PIN ONE TURN AHEAD OF MIA TO TURN MY HAND INTO JUNK!
AND KNOWING THAT HE WOULD ..

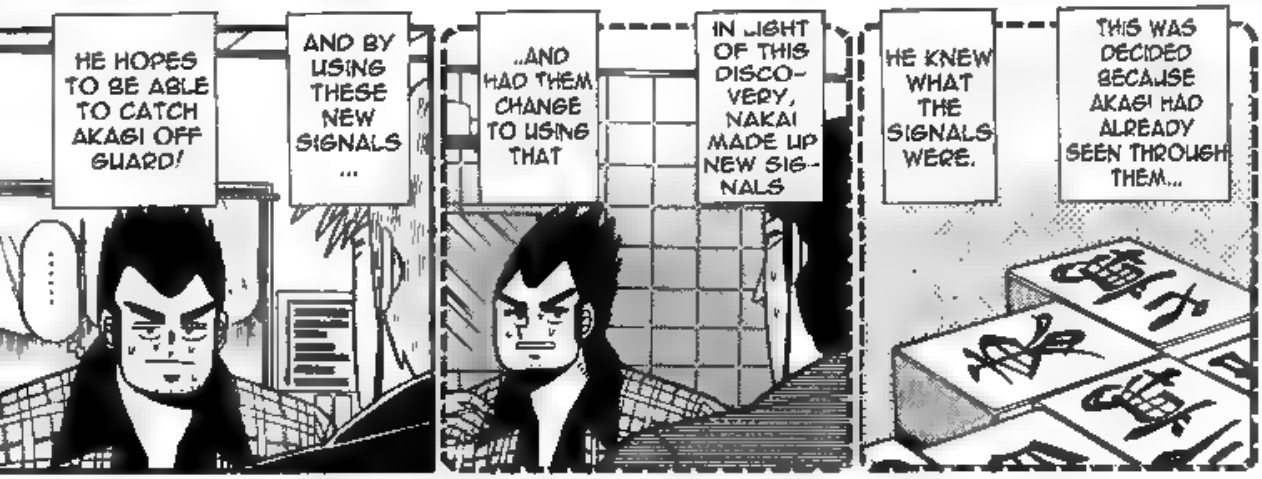

...RON...
IN THE END...
...NAKAI RELUCTANTLY CALLED RON.
IT WAS ONLY A RICHI, IPPATSU HAND WORTH 1300..
HIS PLANNED COMEBACK OVER AKAGI COULD NOT COME TO FRUITION.
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
HE..
HEY!
I JUST NEED TO TAKE A BATHROOM BREAK...
I WON'T BE GONE LONG.
IF EITHER OF YOU TWO NEED TO TAKE A LEAK NOW, TOO...
NOW WOULD BE THE TIME.
ONCE I'M DONE, YOU WON'T BE LEAVING THAT TABLE FOR A SECOND.
IF YOU'RE GOING, DO IT NOW.
YEAH...

KEH!
HOW COULD ANYONE BEAT ALL THREE OF US AT ONCE?!
I DIDN'T SEE ANY-THING WRONG ...
WHAT'S GOING ON, MAN?
HUH ...?
ALL OF OUR SECRETS HAVE BEEN EXPOSED.
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU THINK ...

WE'VE GOT NO OTHER CHOICE.
'FRAID SO
THEY .. THEY HAVE?!
HE'S BEEN PAYIN' TOO MUCH ATTENTION.
WE'VE GOT TO CHANGE UP OUR SIGNALS...


CHANGING THE SIGNALS AROUND ...


HE WILL CHANGE UP THEIR SIGNALS
... NAKAI HAS DECIDED IT IS TIME.
AFTER CONSULTING WITH HIS PARTNERS

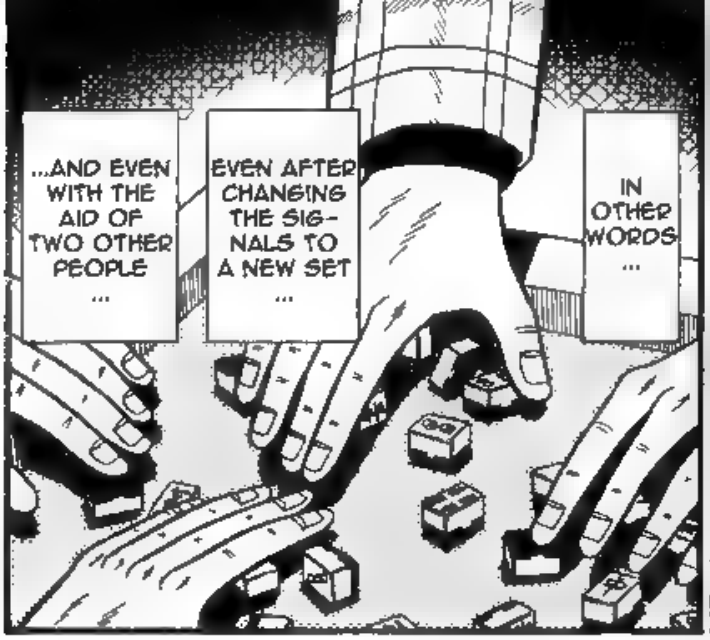

HE HOPES TO BE ABLE TO CATCH AKAGI OFF GUARD!
AND BY USING THESE NEW SIGNALS ...
.....
..AND HAD THEM CHANGE TO USING THAT
IN LIGHT OF THIS DISCOVERY, NAKAI MADE UP NEW SIGNALS
HE KNEW WHAT THE SIGNALS WERE.
THIS WAS DECIDED BECAUSE AKAGI HAD ALREADY SEEN THROUGH THEM...

..I'M DEFINITELY STILL IN RANGE!
I CAN STILL MAKE IT THERE
NOT EXACTLY UNREACHABLE.
..IS JUST AT 1800 NOW.
..THE DIFFERENCE TWEEN US..
NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT

CHAPTER 56 - NOTIFICATION

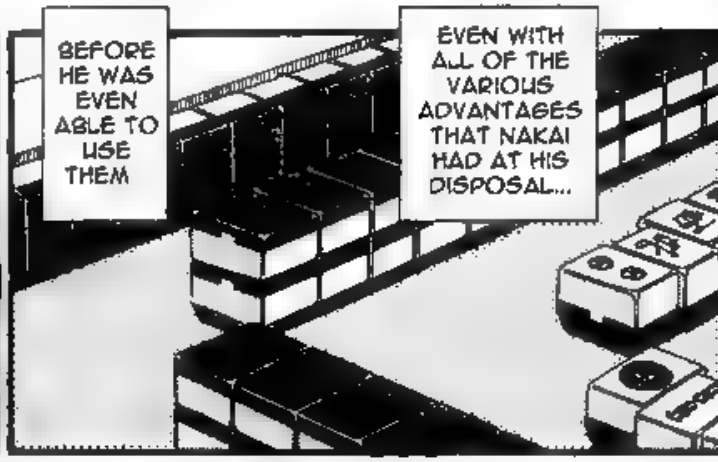
第56話 申告

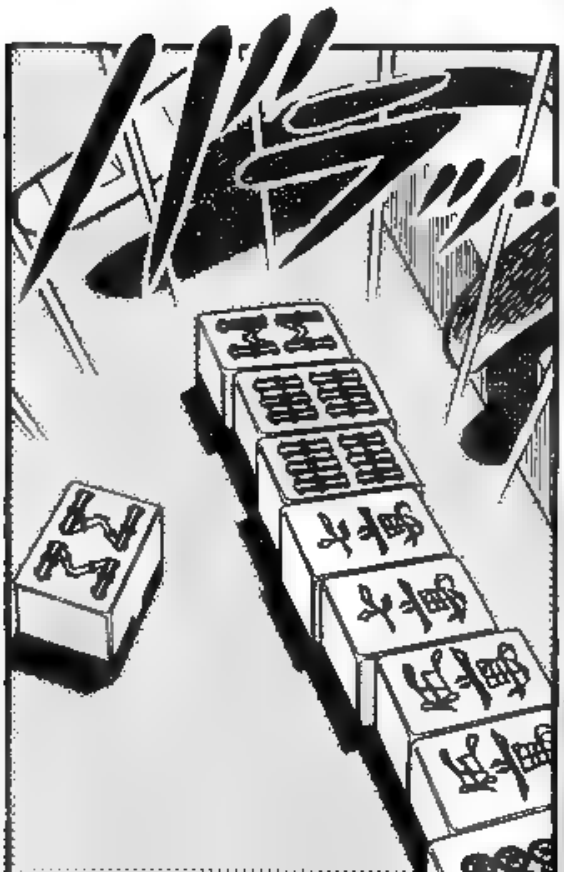
THEN...
IF WE CAN MANAGE TO GET SOME FLOW IN THOSE 3 POUNDS...
AND THERE'S ONLY 3 MORE POUNDS LEFT
NOW WE'VE CHANGED UP OUR SIGNALS
HIS SENSES ARE REALLY SOMETHIN BUT..
SINCE HE FIGURED OUT OUR SIGNALS N SUCH A SHORT TIME LIKE THAT...
...CAN'T POSSIBLY BEAT US!
UP AGAINST ALL THREE OF US WITH NEW SIGNALS..
AKAGI...


...AND EVEN WITH THE AID OF TWO OTHER PEOPLE ...
EVEN AFTER CHANGING THE SIGNALS TO A NEW SET ...
IN OTHER WORDS ...

THINGS WERE ONLY GETTING WORSE AND WORSE FOR HIM.

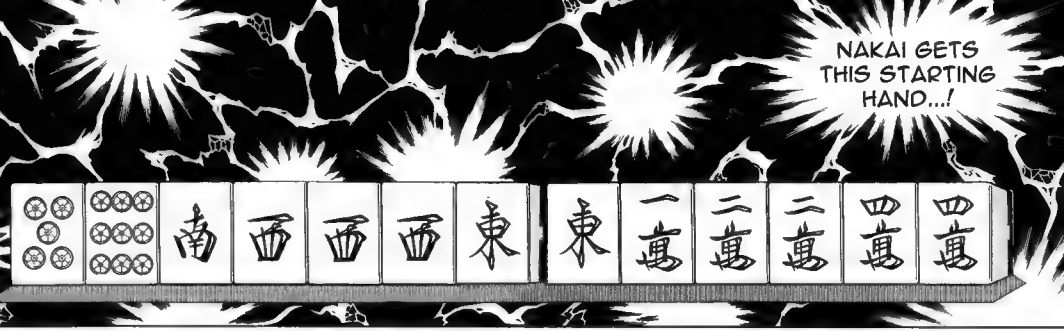
..WOULD SWIFTLY STRIKE TO ELIMINATE SUCH THINGS!
AKAGI ...


BEFORE HE WAS EVEN ABLE TO USE THEM
EVEN WITH ALL OF THE VARIOUS ADVANTAGES THAT NAKAI HAD AT HIS DISPOSAL...

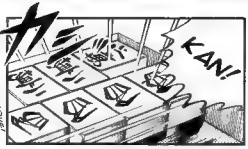


TSUMO!

IT'S ONLY THE 5TH TURN...!!
NO WAY...
URGH ...!
AKAGI HAD COMPLETED YET ANOTHER HAND!
HOW
WHAT IS THIS ..?!
HOW CAN THIS BE HAPPENIN?!
FUCK
IS THERE NO CHANCE LEFT FOR ME NOW?!
IT'S LIKE HE CAN CONTROL THE FLOW ITSELF!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS SUDDEN WAVE OF LUCK HE'S GETTIN'...
IN HIS VERY LAST CHANCE, THE FINAL ROUND ...
AH ..!!
THIS AIN'T SOME -
THIS AIN'T SOME JOKE, HERE!!
FUCK


NAKAI GETS THIS STARTING HAND...!

I'M FOCCIN' MY WAY THOUGH!
IT AIN'T GONNA LET THIS CHANCE GO TO WASTE!


BUT NOW I CAN MOVE!
KAN!

WITH HON ITSU AND TOI TOI...

DORA!!!
THAT EVENS ME

...TO THIS NAN!
I'LL CHANGE THE NEW DORA...
FIRST USIN' A SLEIGHT OF HAND

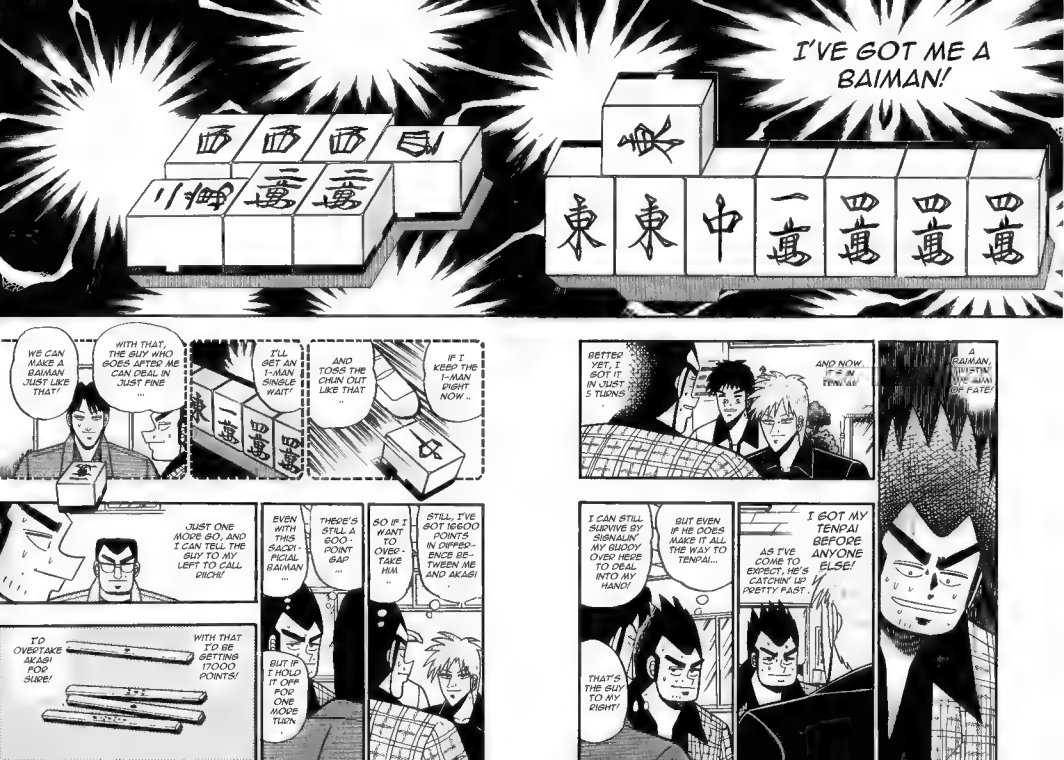
I'VE GOT MYSELF A FIGHTIN' HAND!
AT THE END OF IT ALL...

THIS IS IT!

...AND MY FLOW WAS GETTIN' WORSE AND WORSE...

THINGS WERE STARTIN' TO WEAR ON ME...
DORA!

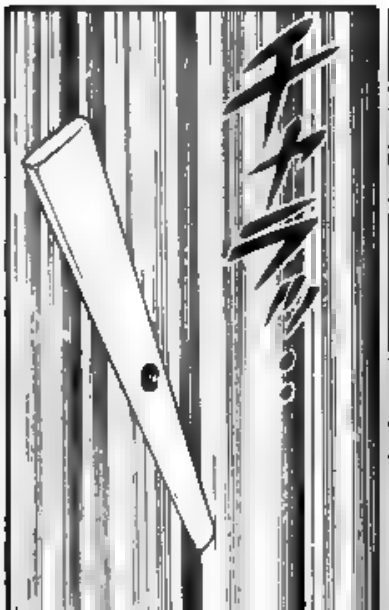
PON!


I'VE GOT ME A BAIMAN!
WE CAN MAKE A BAIMAN JUST LIKE THAT!
WITH THAT, THE GUY WHO GOES AFTER ME CAN DEAL IN JUST FINE ...
I'LL GET AN 1-MAN SINGLE WAIT!
AND TOSS THE CHAIN OUT LIKE THAT ..
IF I KEEP THE 1-MAN RIGHT NOW ..
JUST ONE MORE SO, AND I CAN TELL THE GUY TO MY LEFT TO CALL PICH!
EVEN WITH THIS SACRI-FICIAL BAIMAN ...
THERE'S STILL A 600-POINT GAP ...
SO IF I WANT TO OVER-TAKE HIM ..
STILL, I'VE GOT 16600 POINTS IN DIFFERENCE BE-TWEEN ME AND AKAGI
I'D OVERTAKE AKAGI FOR SURE!
WITH THAT I'D BE GETTING 17000 POINTS!
BUT IF I HOLD IT OFF FOR ONE MORE TURN ..
BETTER YET, I GOT IT IN JUST 5 TURNS ..
AND NOW... IT'S IN TEMPAI!
A BAIMAN, TWISTIN' THE WHIM OF FATE!
I CAN STILL SURVIVE BY SIGNALIN' MY BUDDY OVER HERE TO DEAL INTO MY HAND!
BUT EVEN IF HE DOES MAKE IT ALL THE WAY TO TENPAI...
THAT'S THE GUY TO MY RIGHT!
AS I'VE COME TO EXPECT, HE'S CATCHIN' UP PRETTY FAST.
I GOT MY TENPAI BEFORE ANYONE ELSE!

I'VE FINALLY GOT 'IM ON THE ROPES!

I'VE FINALLY GOT THE HAND THAT'LL BEAT HIM!

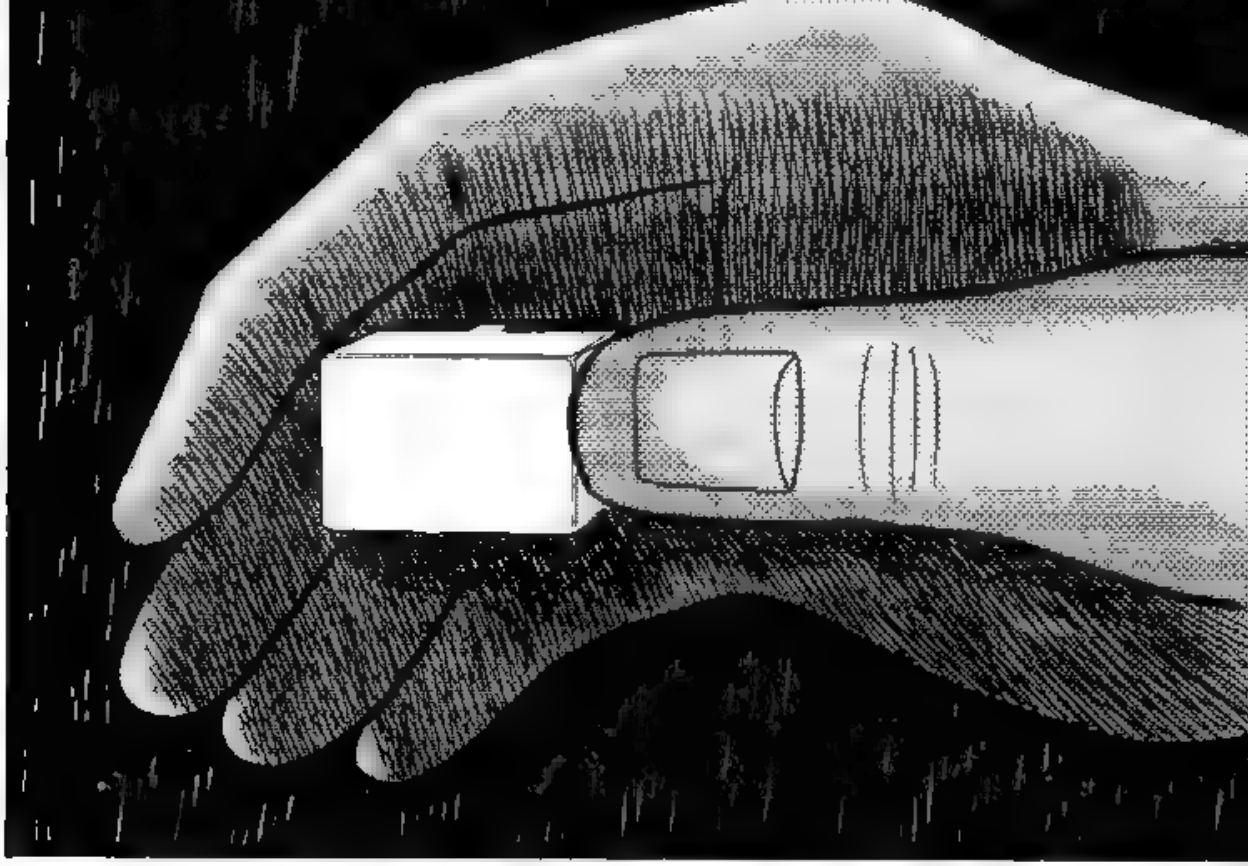
BUT SOMEHOW OR ANOTHER
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMIN'..

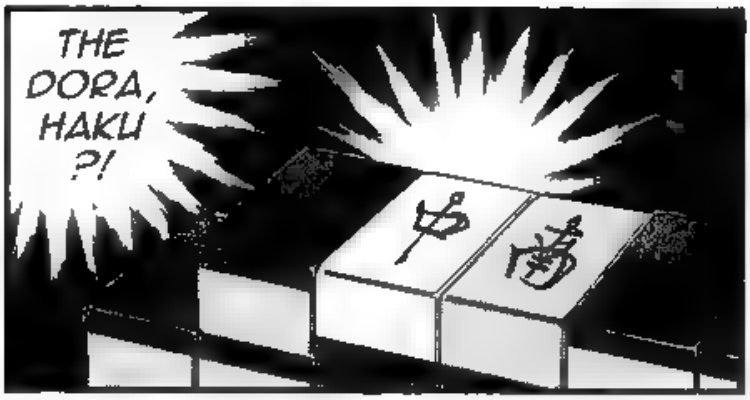

チャラ

HMM-HM-HM..

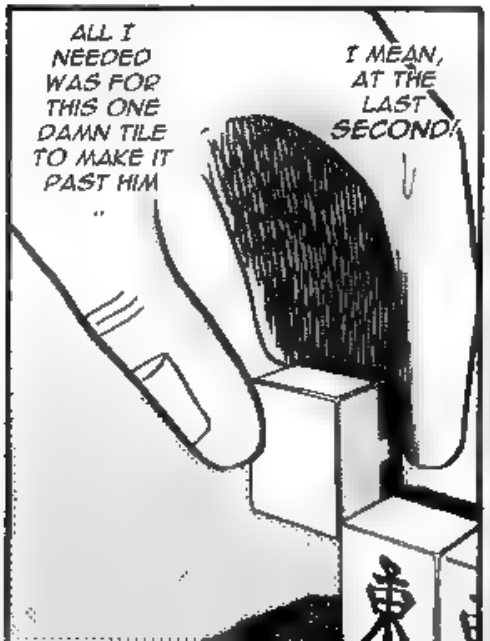
HUH ...?!
PIICHI.

WHAT A LOAD OF CRAP
KH ...!
GH ...!
I'LL NEVER ASK FOR ANY THING AGAIN JUST GIVE ME THIS ONE THING
I'M BEGGIN' YOU GIMME A SAFE TILE ..!
FUCK!
WHEN ALL I NEEDED WAS ONE MORE PUSH
RIGHT AT THE LAST MINUTE




THE DORA, HAKU ?!

GH ...!!

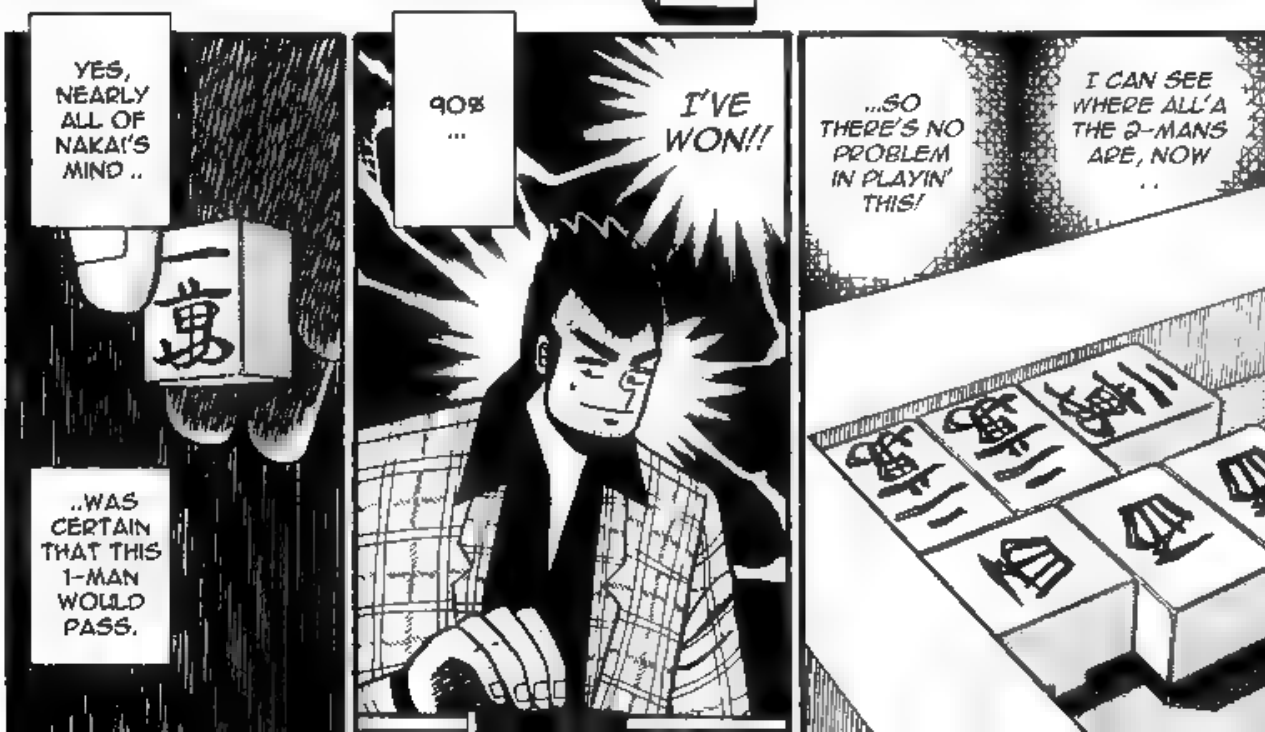

ALL I NEEDED WAS FOR THIS ONE DAMN TILE TO MAKE IT PAST HIM ..
I MEAN, AT THE LAST SECOND!

THIS IS BULLSHIT ..!!

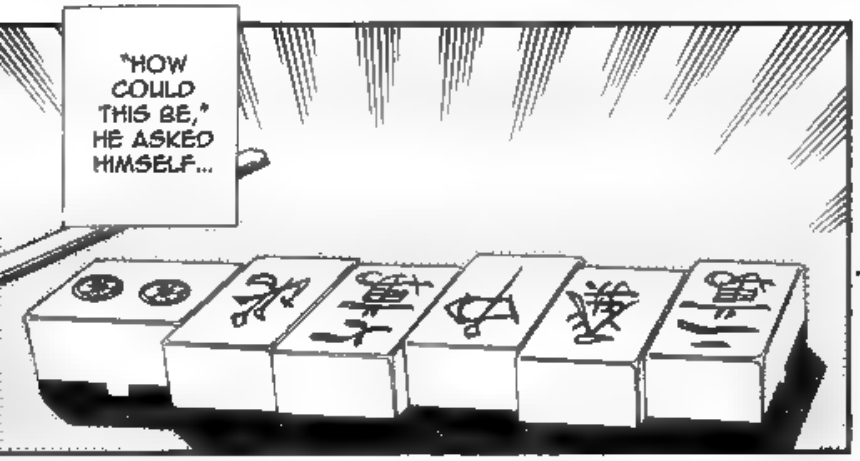
IF FOUR-EYES OVER THERE KEPT A SPARE HAKU FOR WHATEVER REASON, THERE'D BE NO PROBLEM.
BUT THAT'S PROBLY TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE
WHAT FUCKIN' HORSE SHIT!
AND WHAT DO I GET?! THE MOTHER-FUCKIN' OORA?!
HUH ...?!
BUT DOES HE REALLY ..?!
I JUST GAVE HIM THE SIGNAL TO SHOW IF HE HAS ONE...
AH ..!!

IF MY BUDDY HERE KEPT A HAKU ..
THEN I CAN SAFELY WAIT WITH THIS ONE!
NOW IT'S FINE TO DEAL THIS HERE HAKU!
I'VE BEEN SAVED ...!
ALL RIGHT ...!!

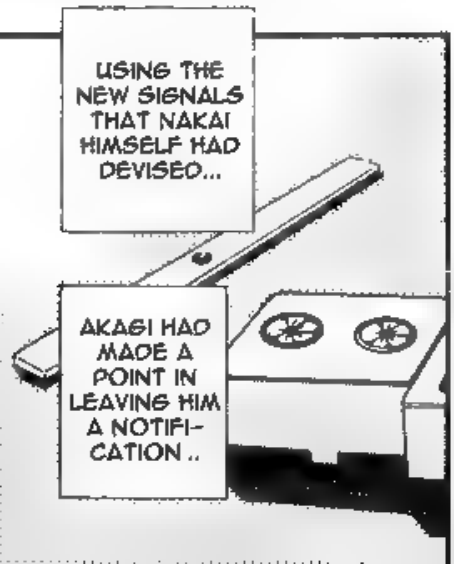
NOW, I CAN CHANGE IT UP FOR THIS 1-MAN!
NO PRO-BLEM!
AND THANKS TO ATAMA HANE, I'LL GET IT FIRST, FOR SURE!
IN THE NEXT TURN, MY ALLY CAN PLAY THE HAKU!
IT'S LIKELY THAT AKAGI HAS THE SAME SINGLE-HAKU WAIT, BUT ..


YES, NEARLY ALL OF NAKAI'S MIND ..
..WAS CERTAIN THAT THIS 1-MAN WOULD PASS.
90% ...
I'VE WON!!
...SO THERE'S NO PROBLEM IN PLAYIN' THIS!
I CAN SEE WHERE ALL'A THE 2-MANS ARE, NOW ..

BUT IN THE MOMENT HE WAS TO PLAY IT ON THE TABLE...


"HOW COULD THIS BE," HE ASKED HIMSELF...

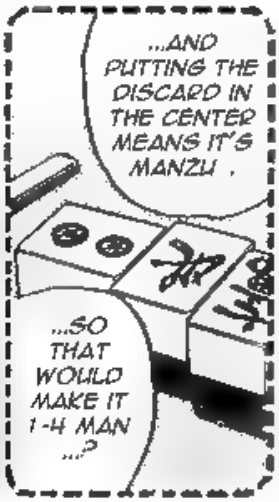
.. A HORRI-FYING REALI-SATION TRE-MORED THROUGH HIS BODY ...!
URGH ...!

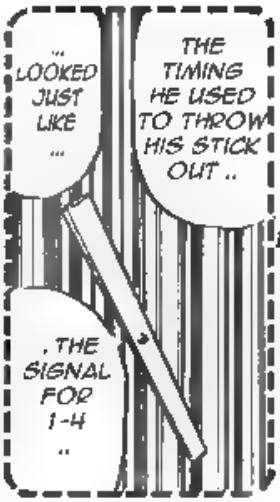

USING THE NEW SIGNALS THAT NAKAI HIMSELF HAD DEVISED...
AKAGI HAD MADE A POINT IN LEAVING HIM A NOTIFI-CATION ..

URGH ...!
AKAGI HAD LAID OUT A SIGNAL OF HIS OWN...!

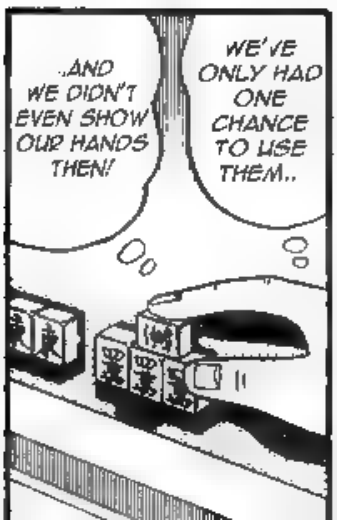
...THAT HIS WAIT WAS 1-4 MAN...!

NO... NO WAY ...!!


...AND PUTTING THE DISCARD IN THE CENTER MEANS IT'S MANZU .
...SO THAT WOULD MAKE IT 1-4 MAN ...?


... LOOKED JUST LIKE ...
THE TIMING HE USED TO THROW HIS STICK OUT ..
. THE SIGNAL FOR 1-4 ..

BUT ...
IMPOSSIBLE .
.....

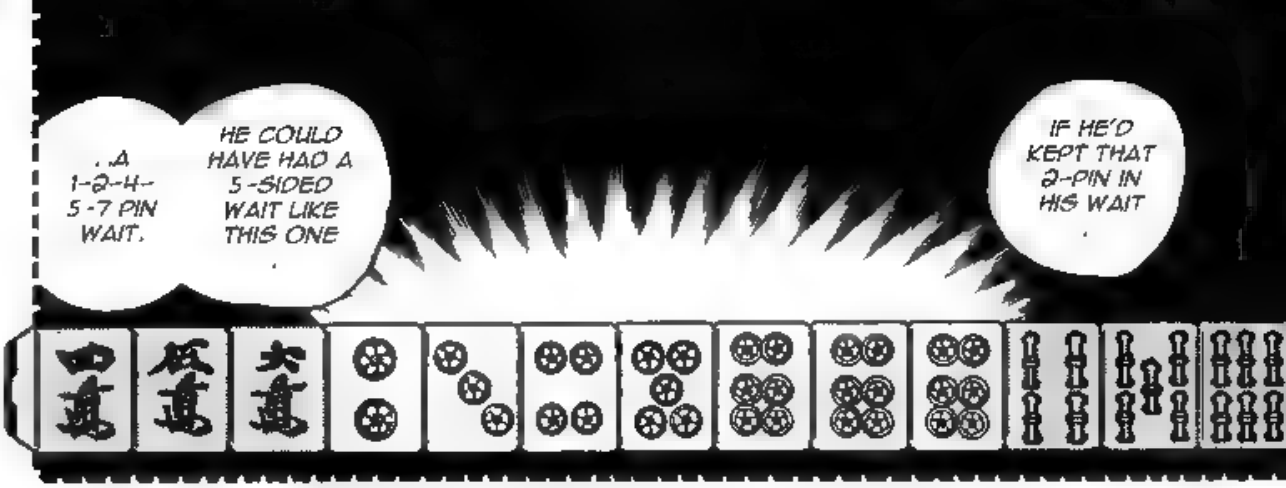

..AND WE DIDN'T EVEN SHOW OUR HANDS THEN!
WE'VE ONLY HAD ONE CHANCE TO USE THEM..

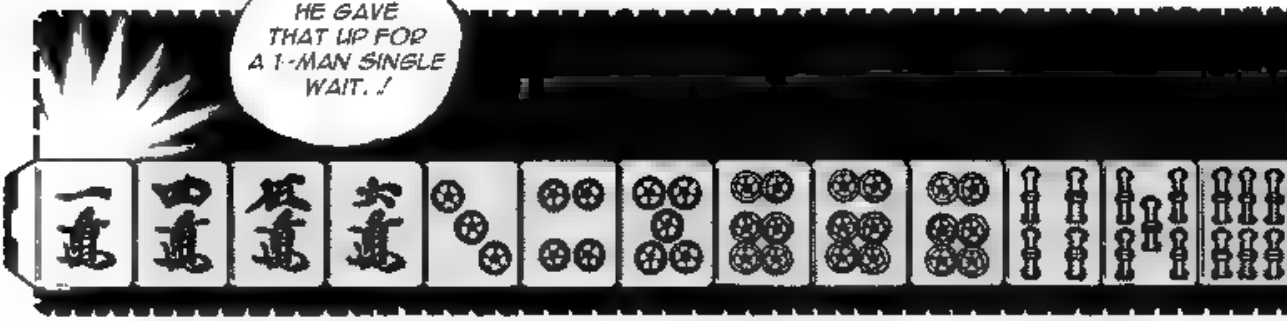
SINCE WE GOT THE NEW SIGNALS .
THERE'S NO WAY AKAGI CAN KNOW HOW WE DID IT!

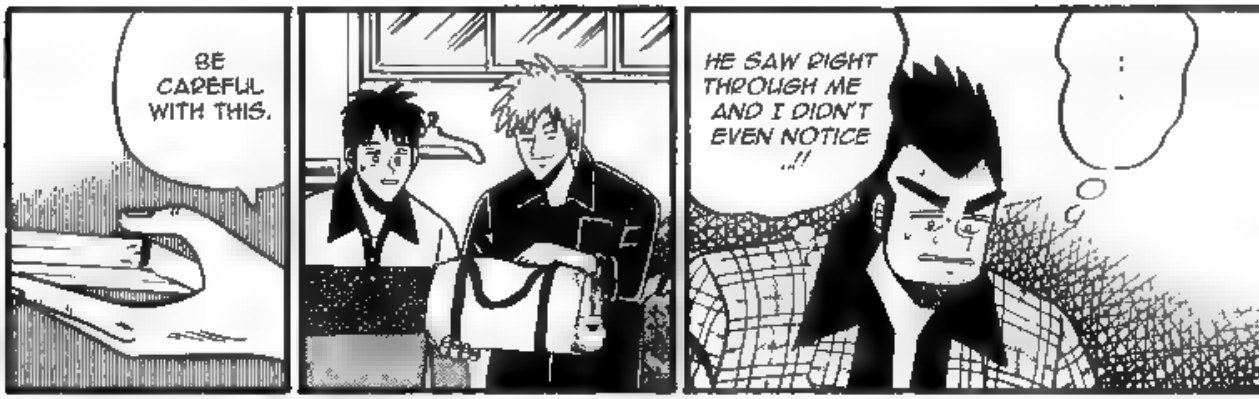
WE'VE CHANGED THEM UP SINCE THEN!
IF IT WAS THE OLD SIGNALS, I COULD BELIEVE IT, BUT. .

ALTHOUGH..
THIS IS THE ONLY MAN WHO I CAN'T UNDERSTAND..
I SUP-POSE..
WE DID CHANGE UP THE SIGNS IN A BIT OF A HURRY IN THE SHORT TIME WE HAD...
AND THE CHANGES WE ENDED UP MAKING.
..WERE A RATHER IMPROVISED SWITCH..
JUST BASING IT OFF OF THE ORIGINAL SIGNALS WE HAD..
WITHOUT HAVING EVEN SEEN SO MUCH AS A HINT AS TO WHAT WAS IN OUR HANDS.
..COULD HE HAVE FIGURED IT OUT BY SHEER THOUGHT..?
NO FUCKIN' WAY
THERE AIN'T A CHANCE IN HELL!
I CAN'T LET MY SELF THINK LIKE THAT!
THAT SHIT IS JUST RIDI-CU-LOUS..
HMM-HM-HM...

A 1-MAN WAIT...!
UGH ...!
I GUESS THAT'S IT.
IT'S TOO BAD, ISN'T IT?
THE FACT THAT I'D DEAL THE 1-MAN..
THE NEW SIGNALS THAT WE MADE..
THIS GUY... HE READ ME LIKE A BOOK ..
HE GAVE IT ALL AWAY WITH THE WAY HE PLAYED THAT 2-PIN!
THAT TILE HE USED TO DISCH..
AND NOT ONLY THAT ..
RON.
HMM-HM-HM ...


. .A 1-2-4-5-7 PIN WAIT.
HE COULD HAVE HAD A 5-SIDED WAIT LIKE THIS ONE .
IF HE'D KEPT THAT 2-PIN IN HIS WAIT .

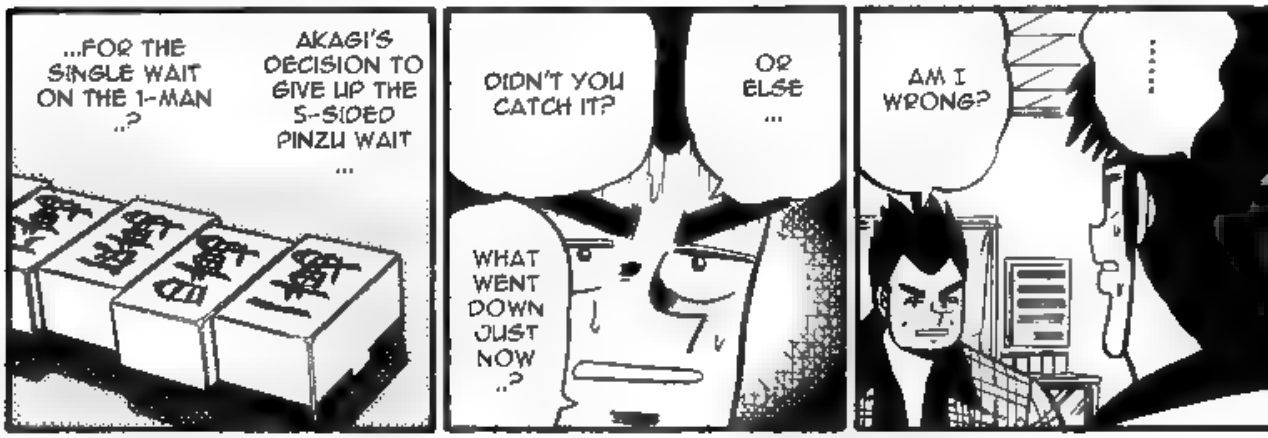

HE GAVE THAT UP FOR A 1-MAN SINGLE WAIT. .!


BE CAREFUL WITH THIS.
HE SAW RIGHT THROUGH ME AND I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE ..!!
. . .

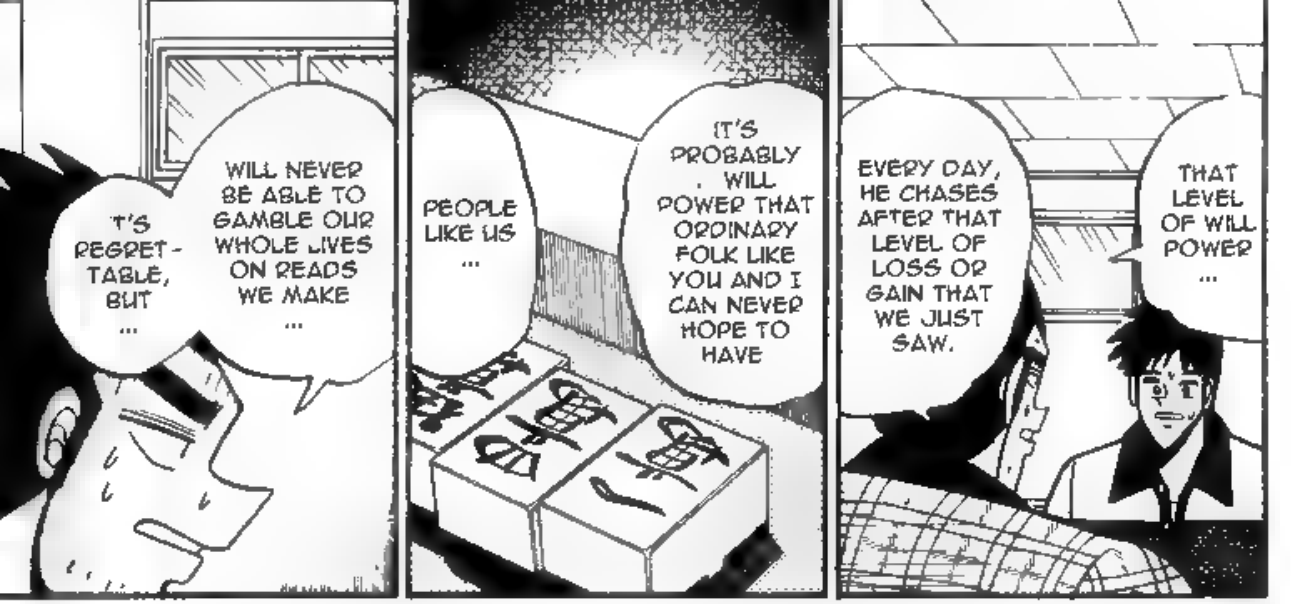
STOP THAT!
AKAGI-SAN ....!!
REALLY ...?!
ARE YOU LEAVING FOR GOOD, NOW ...?!
. . .

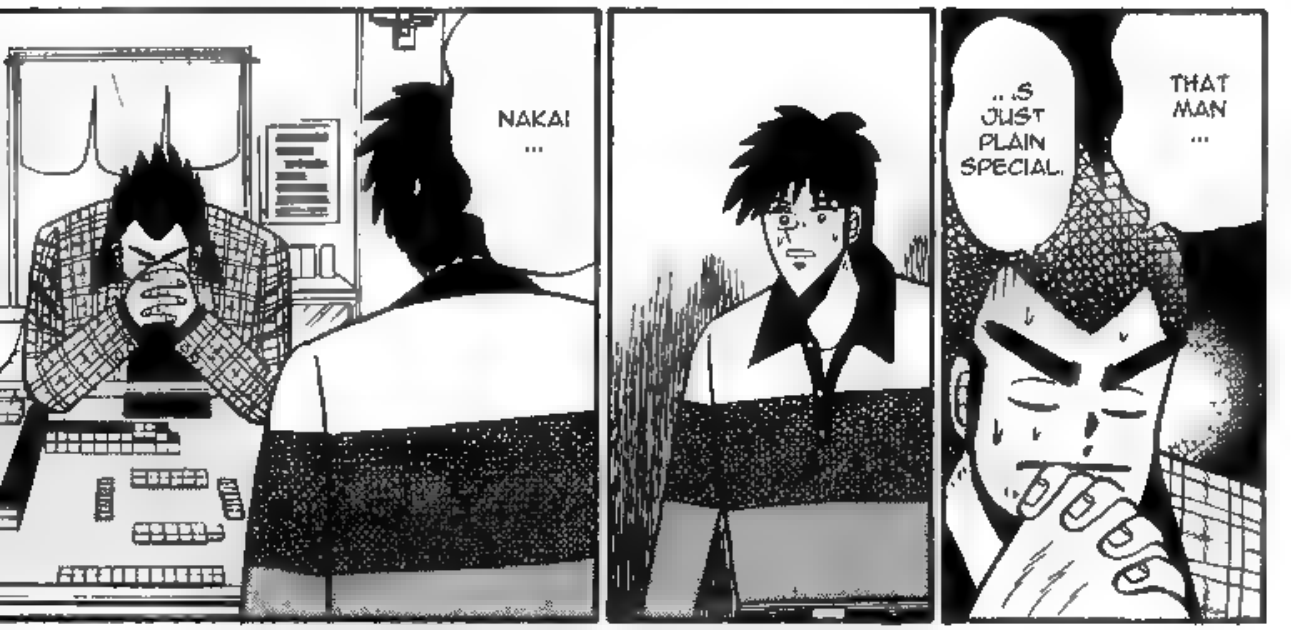
HE AIN'T COMIN' BACK.
AND THE WAY HE LIVES ARE COM-PLETELY DIFFERENT
. THE WAY HE SEES THINGS ...
HE LIVES IN A WORLD THAT'S DIFFERENT FROM YOURS AND MINE..
THAT MAN ...
...CAN NEVER DIVE AS DEEP AS HE CAN..
...WE CAN NEVER LIVE LIKE HE DOES.
COMMON FISH LIKE US ...
THAT MAN IS LIKE. A FISH THAT LURKS AROUND AT THE VERY BOTTOM OF THE SEA..
THAT IS TO SAY ...
HE DOESN'T NEED TO HAVE A BUNCH'A SMALL FRY SWIMMIN' AROUND HIM ...

AKAGI'S CONDUCT ...
FOR NORMAL PEOPLE ...
HIS WAY OF LIFE WOULDN'T FIT THEM
..BUT ON THE NSIDE, HE'S EXCEP-TIONAL.
HE MAY LOOK LIKE A NORMAL PERSON ON THE OUTSIDE ...
.. WHO HAS SENSES THAT ARE JUST AS STRANGE, BUT ALL THE MORE DEADLY
HE'S A STRANGE SPECIES OF FISH ...


...FOR THE SINGLE WAIT ON THE 1-MAN ..?
AKAGI'S DECISION TO GIVE UP THE 5-SIDED PINZU WAIT ...
DIDN'T YOU CATCH IT?
OR ELSE ...
WHAT WENT DOWN JUST NOW ..?
AM I WRONG?
.....

. BUT THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN LIES ON THE SUR-FACE...
IN ORDER TO DO THAT ...
THAT MEANS HE HAD TO HAVE READ RIGHT INTO ME WITH THAT 1-MAN SINGLE WAIT ...
AND HE HAD TO TAKE THAT FAITH AND FOLLOW THROUGH WITH IT..
THAT'S WHAT IT TOOK.
HE HAD TO TRUST HIMSELF ENOUGH TO PUT HIS WHOLE FAITH IN THAT READ HE MADE OF WHAT I HAD..
NO ...
THAT RIGHT ... WELL, T WAS AN UNBELIEVABLE DECIS ON ...
SUPPO-SIN' THE 1-MAN WASN'T IN MY HAND WHEN HE DID THAT ...
..HE WOULD'A LOST, FOR SURE.


THAT LEVEL OF WILL POWER ...
EVERY DAY, HE CHASES AFTER THAT LEVEL OF LOSS OR GAIN THAT WE JUST SAW.
IT'S PROBABLY . WILL POWER THAT ORDINARY FOLK LIKE YOU AND I CAN NEVER HOPE TO HAVE
PEOPLE LIKE US ...
WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO GAMBLE OUR WHOLE LIVES ON READS WE MAKE ...
IT'S REGRET-TABLE, BUT ...


THAT MAN ...
..IS JUST PLAIN SPECIAL.
NAKAI ...

.....
AKAGI-SAN...

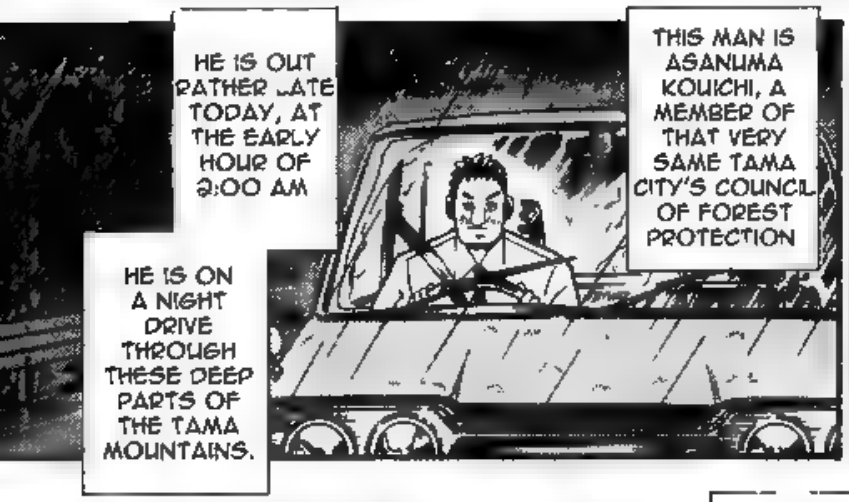
若柳

AKAGI

THE GENIUS WHO FELL INTO THE DARKNESS.
A WORK BY FUKUMOTO NOBUYUKI.

第57話 怪死
CHAPTER 57 - HOMICIDE

SHOWA ERA, YEAR 40.
(1965)
IT IS THE MIDDLE OF SUMMER, AUGUST 1ST.


HE IS OUT RATHER LATE TODAY, AT THE EARLY HOUR OF 2:00 AM
THIS MAN IS ASANUMA KOUICHI, A MEMBER OF THAT VERY SAME TAMA CITY'S COUNCIL OF FOREST PROTECTION
HE IS ON A NIGHT DRIVE THROUGH THESE DEEP PARTS OF THE TAMA MOUNTAINS.

BE-TWEEN TOKYO AND TAMA CITY
THE LO-CATION IS THE TAMA MOUNTAIN-SIDE...

ピカ

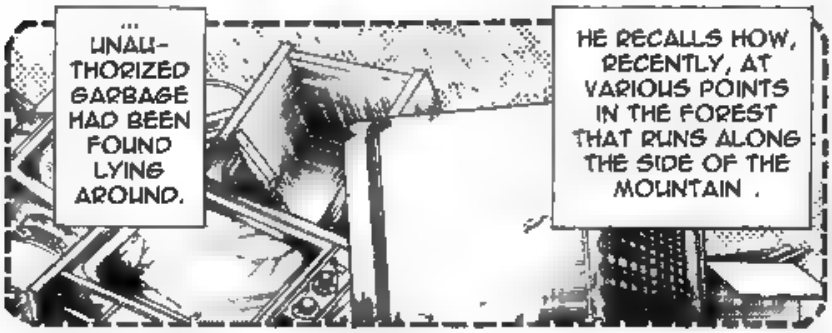
...AND IS STILL QUITE BUZZED FROM THE LARGE QUANTITIES OF ALCHO-HOL HE CONSUMED.
HE HAS JUST LEFT A FAREWELL PARTY FOR A DEAR FRIEND OF HIS..

..AND IS AL-MOST IN THE CITY, WHEN
NATURALLY, HE IS DRIVING BACK HOME TO TAMA CITY AT THIS TIME

ザザザ
...HE SEES A LIGHT!

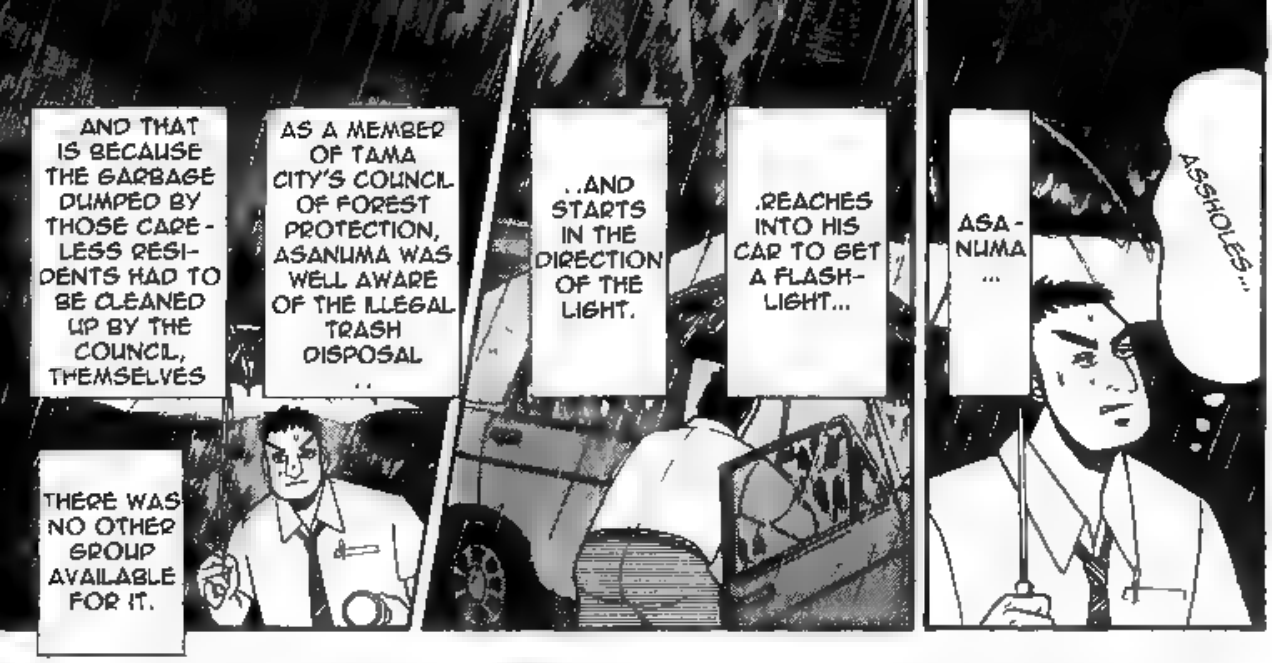
HE HEARS RUSTLING SOUNDS COMING FROM THAT DIRECTION ..
ONCE ASA-NUMA STEPS OUT OF HIS CAR ...
IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE THERE

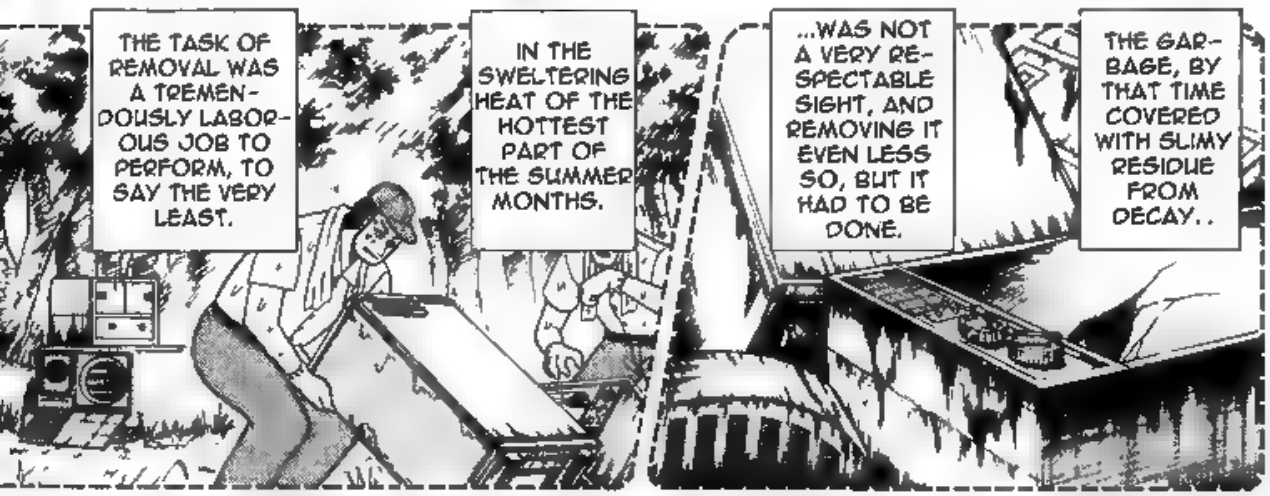
IT IS CLOSE
THIS LIGHT EMITTING FROM THE FOREST IS NOT AT ALL OUT OF WALKING RANGE.


... UNAU-THORIZED GARBAGE HAD BEEN FOUND LYING AROUND.
HE RECALLS HOW, RECENTLY, AT VARIOUS POINTS IN THE FOREST THAT RUNS ALONG THE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN .

HE FORMS AN IDEA AS TO WHO IT MIGHT BE..
UPON DISCO-VER-ING THIS .
.....

...HAVE BEEN ARBITRARILY DUMPED THERE BY NEARBY RE-SIDENTS, NOT WANTING TO DEAL WITH IT THEMSELVES.
THIS CAN ONLY MEAN THAT LARGE, CUMBERSOME ITEMS OF TRASH THAT PEOPLE NO LONGER HAVE A USE FOR ..


ASSHOLES...
ASA-NUMA ...
..REACHES INTO HIS CAR TO GET A FLASH-LIGHT...
..AND STARTS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE LIGHT.
AS A MEMBER OF TAMA CITY'S COUNCIL OF FOREST PROTECTION, ASANUMA WAS WELL AWARE OF THE ILLEGAL TRASH DISPOSAL ..
AND THAT IS BECAUSE THE GARBAGE DUMPED BY THOSE CARE-LESS RESI-DENTS HAD TO BE CLEANED UP BY THE COUNCIL, THEMSELVES
THERE WAS NO OTHER GROUP AVAILABLE FOR IT.


THE GAR-BAGE, BY THAT TIME COVERED WITH SLIMY RESIDUE FROM DECAY..
...WAS NOT A VERY RE-SPECTABLE SIGHT, AND REMOVING IT EVEN LESS SO, BUT IT HAD TO BE DONE.
IN THE SWELTERING HEAT OF THE HOTTEST PART OF THE SUMMER MONTHS.
THE TASK OF REMOVAL WAS A TREMEN-DOUSLY LABOR-OUS JOB TO PERFORM, TO SAY THE VERY LEAST.

AND HERE HE WAS, ABLE TO PUT A STOP TO IT AT THE SCENE OF THE CRIME ...
HOW PATHETIC ..
IT REALLY IS THEM ..
HEY, YOU!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE-...?!
AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE, HE HAD TO DO JUST THAT TO ENFORCE THE LAW.
.....
THOSE DAMN PARA-SITES ...

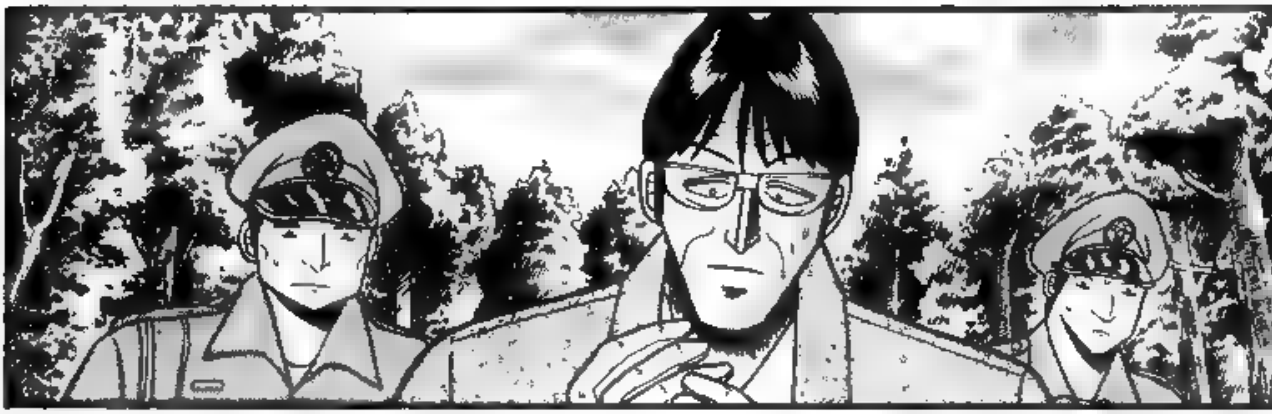
カラン…

AAAAA
AAAAA
AAAUU
GGHH
HHH!!

トン…
ガッ
GYAUGH!!
WAUGH!!

GH-
....
huhhh
!!
.....
huhhh
!!!
.....
GYAAA
AAAAA
AAAUUU
UUUGG
GGHH
HHH
!!!!!!
THIS
MARKED
THE
BEGIN-
NING
...

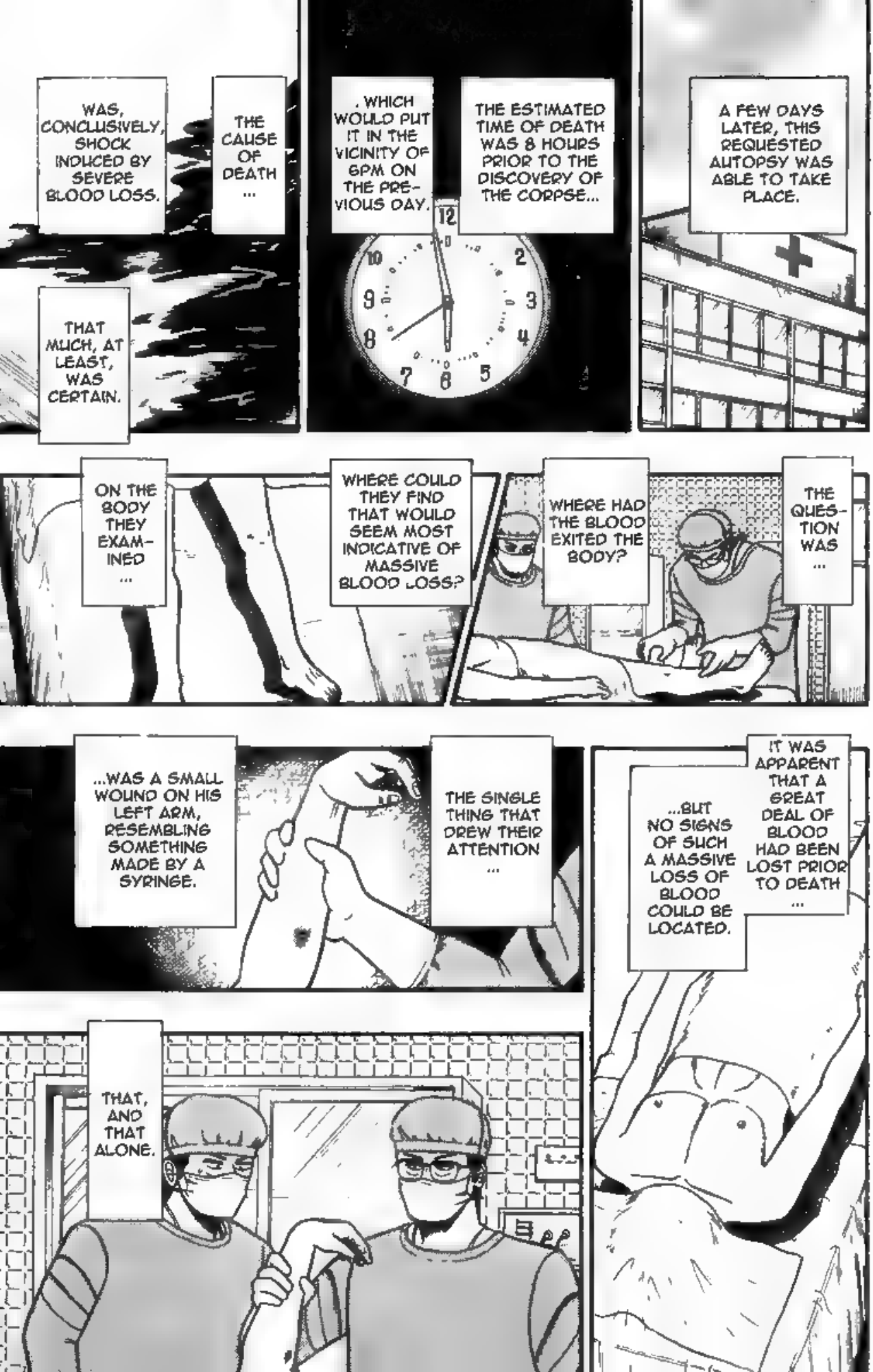
MARKED THE LAUNCHING POINT OF THE MADMAN'S RAMPAGE.
THIS EXTRA-ORDINARILY BIZARRE HAPPENING ...

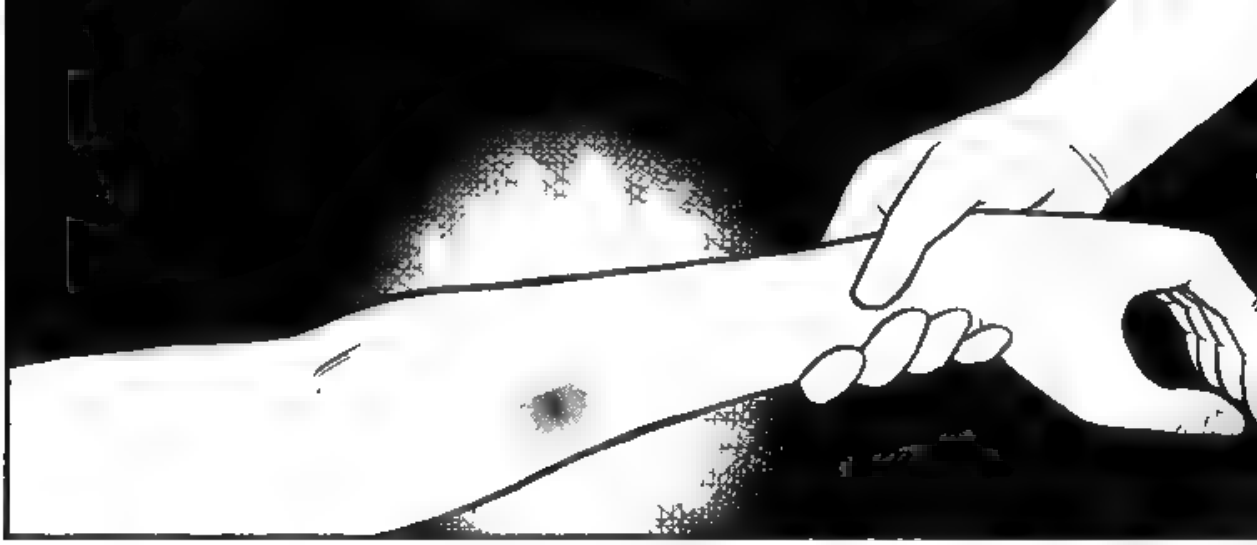


..DID NOT APPEAR TO HAVE SUSTAINED ANY GRAVE INJURIES.
THE MAN FOUND BURIED BENEATH THE SOIL THAT DAY ...

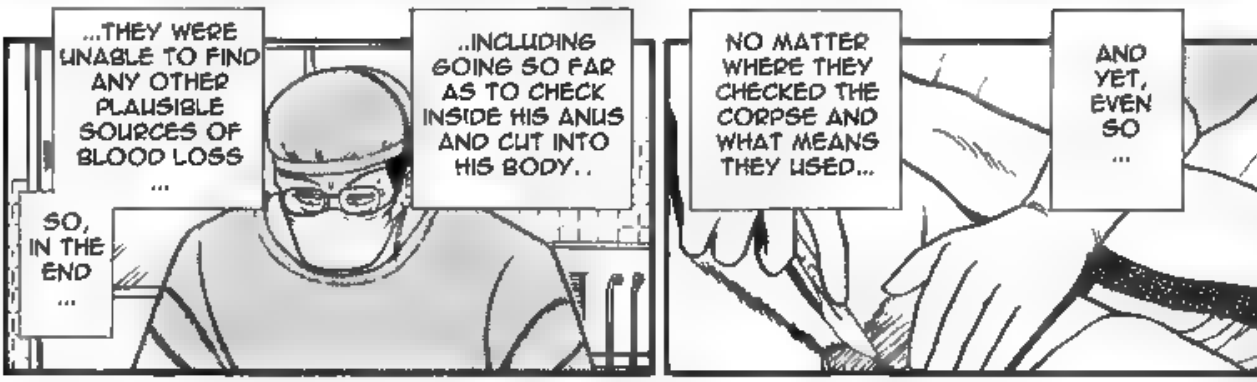
.. THE POLICE RUSHED TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME TO INVESTI-GATE
THE VERY NEXT MORNING AFTER ASANUMA REPORTED WHAT HE SAW.
立入禁止
警視庁

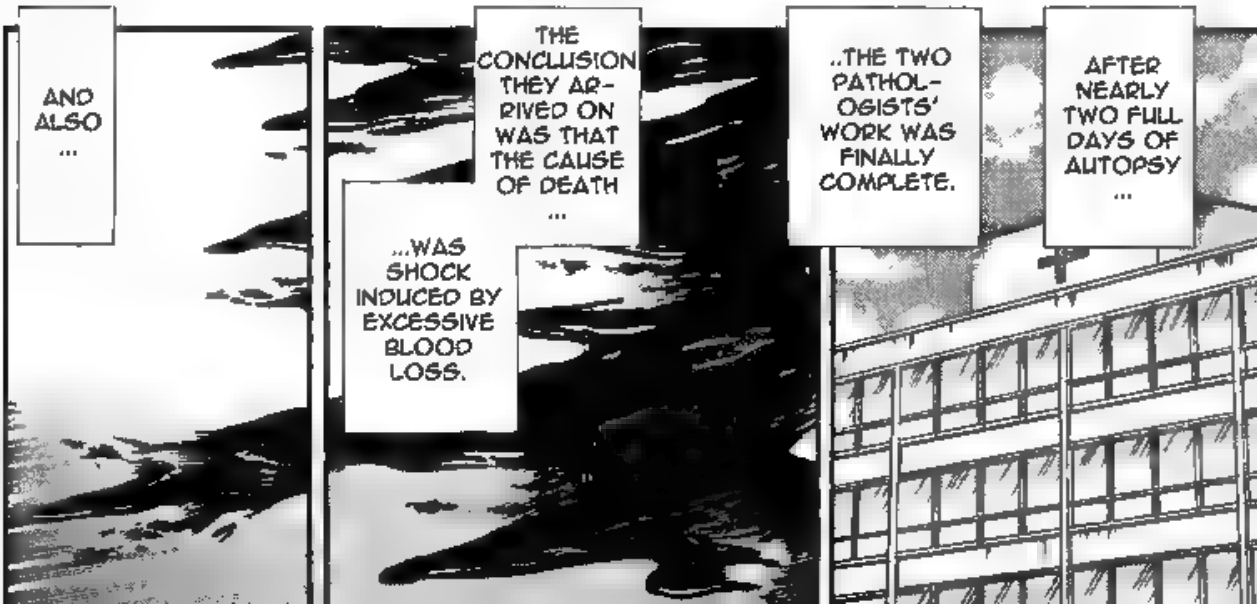
...IT WAS DECIDED NECESSARY TO PERFORM AN AUTOPSY ON THE BODY.
AND WITHOUT THE ABILITY TO DISCERN THE CAUSE OF DEATH FROM SUCH THINGS AS WOUNDS ...


A FEW DAYS LATER, THIS REQUESTED AUTOPSY WAS ABLE TO TAKE PLACE.
THE ESTIMATED TIME OF DEATH WAS 8 HOURS PRIOR TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE CORPSE...
. WHICH WOULD PUT IT IN THE VICINITY OF 6PM ON THE PREVIOUS DAY.
THE CAUSE OF DEATH ...
WAS, CONCLUSIVELY, SHOCK INDUCED BY SEVERE BLOOD LOSS.
THAT MUCH, AT LEAST, WAS CERTAIN.
THE QUESTION WAS ...
WHERE HAD THE BLOOD EXITED THE BODY?
WHERE COULD THEY FIND THAT WOULD SEEM MOST INDICATIVE OF MASSIVE BLOOD LOSS?
ON THE BODY THEY EXAMINED ...
IT WAS APPARENT THAT A GREAT DEAL OF BLOOD HAD BEEN LOST PRIOR TO DEATH ...
...BUT NO SIGNS OF SUCH A MASSIVE LOSS OF BLOOD COULD BE LOCATED.
THE SINGLE THING THAT DREW THEIR ATTENTION ...
...WAS A SMALL WOUND ON HIS LEFT ARM, RESEMBLING SOMETHING MADE BY A SYRINGE.
THAT, AND THAT ALONE.



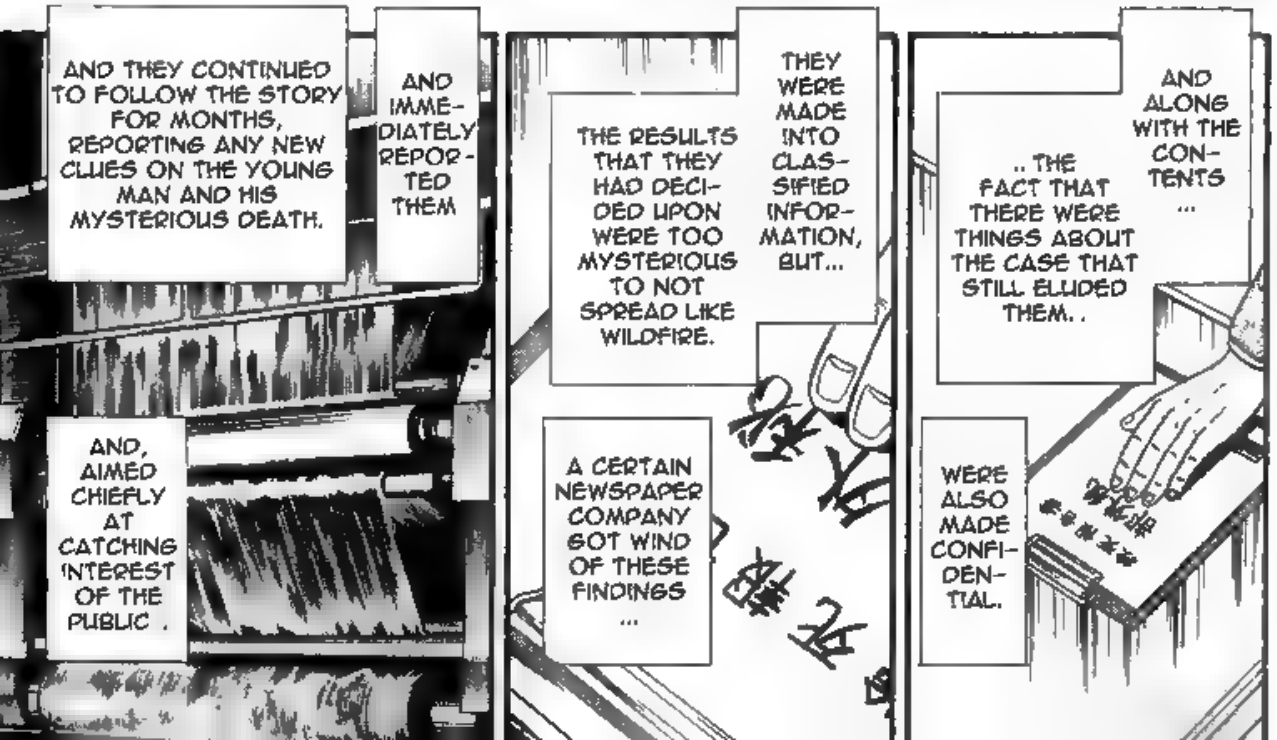
I DOUBT IT.
IT CAN'T BE THAT... CAN .T?


...THEY WERE UNABLE TO FIND ANY OTHER PLAUSIBLE SOURCES OF BLOOD LOSS ...
SO, IN THE END ...
..INCLUDING GOING SO FAR AS TO CHECK INSIDE HIS ANUS AND CUT INTO HIS BODY..
NO MATTER WHERE THEY CHECKED THE CORPSE AND WHAT MEANS THEY USED...
AND YET, EVEN SO ...


AND ALSO ...
THE CONCLUSION THEY AR- RIVED ON WAS THAT THE CAUSE OF DEATH ...
...WAS SHOCK INDUCED BY EXCESSIVE BLOOD LOSS.
..THE TWO PATHOL- OGISTS' WORK WAS FINALLY COMPLETE.
AFTER NEARLY TWO FULL DAYS OF AUTOPSY ...

THE THING THEY WERE CERTAIN OF..
. WAS THAT THE MAN HAD DIED AFTER A LARGE AMOUNT OF BLOOD WAS EXTRACTED FROM HIS LEFT ARM.
...WERE NOT SURE IF IT WAS HOMICIDE, SUICIDE, OR SOME KIND OF MEDICAL EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG, BUT ...
THE PATHO-LOGISTS ...
...THAT THE BLOOD HAD BEEN EXTRACTED THROUGH THE HOLE IN HIS LEFT ARM.

.. THESE AUTOPSY RESULTS WERE ORI-GINALLY INTENDED TO BE KEPT A SECRET FROM THE PUBLIC ..
AND SO ...
..AND WERE THUS MADE CONFI-DENTIAL.
. .AND AN AS-TONISHING REPORT!
IT WAS STILL A MYSTER-IOUS DEATH..
ALTHOUGH THEY NOW KNEW HOW THE MAN HAD DIED...


AND THEY CONTINUED TO FOLLOW THE STORY FOR MONTHS, REPORTING ANY NEW CLUES ON THE YOUNG MAN AND HIS MYSTERIOUS DEATH.
AND IMME-DIATELY REPOR-TED THEM
AND, AIMED CHIEFLY AT CATCHING INTEREST OF THE PUBLIC .
THE RESULTS THAT THEY HAD DECI-DED UPON WERE TOO MYSTERIOUS TO NOT SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE.
THEY WERE MADE INTO CLAS-SIFIED INFOR-MATION, BUT...
A CERTAIN NEWSPAPER COMPANY GOT WIND OF THESE FINDINGS ...
.. THE FACT THAT THERE WERE THINGS ABOUT THE CASE THAT STILL ELUDED THEM. .
AND ALONG WITH THE CON-TENTS ...
WERE ALSO MADE CONFI-DEN-TIAL.

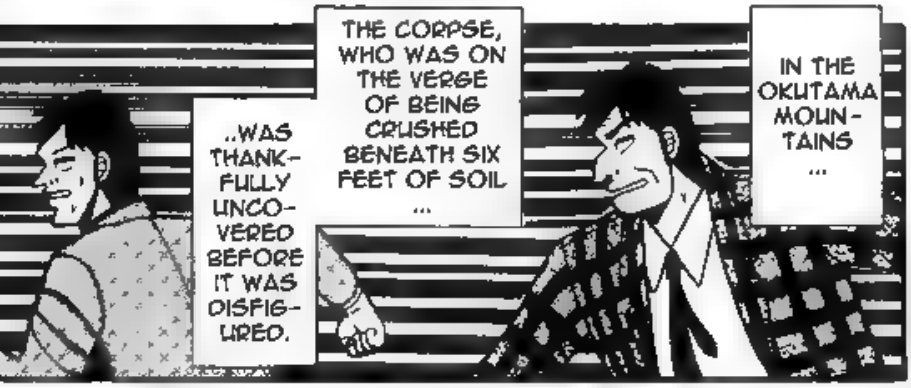
THE DEATH BECAME KNOWN ...

AS THE VAMPIRE MURDER ...

YASUOKA DID NOT SEEM TO SHOW ANY SIGNS OF INTEREST IN THE CASE
WHEN THE NEWS FIRST BEGAN TO SPREAD ...
POLICE DETECTIVE YASUOKA

HMM?
EXCUSE ME, SIR ...

WHA ...?!


..WAS THANK-FULLY UNCO-VERED BEFORE IT WAS DISFIG-URED.
THE CORPSE, WHO WAS ON THE VERGE OF BEING CRUSHED BENEATH SIX FEET OF SOIL ...
IN THE OKUTAMA MOUN-TAINS ...

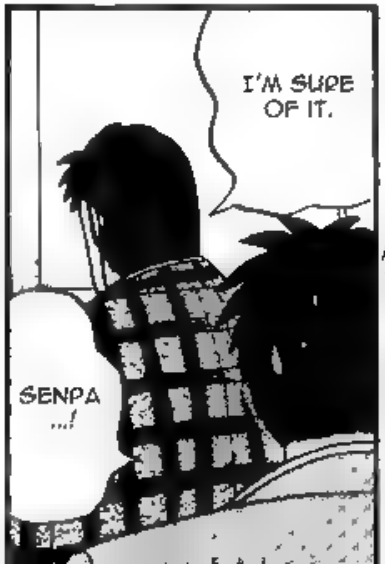
Y..
PLEASE COME WITH ME RIGHT AWAY, SIR.!
YEAH ...

AND SO..

THE INVES-TIGATION SQUAD HAD TAKEN TURNS RACKING THEIR BRAINS ...
AND THUS, HE COULD BE EASILY REC-OGNIZED BY SOMEONE WHO KNEW HIM..

.....
WHAT DO YOU THINK ..?

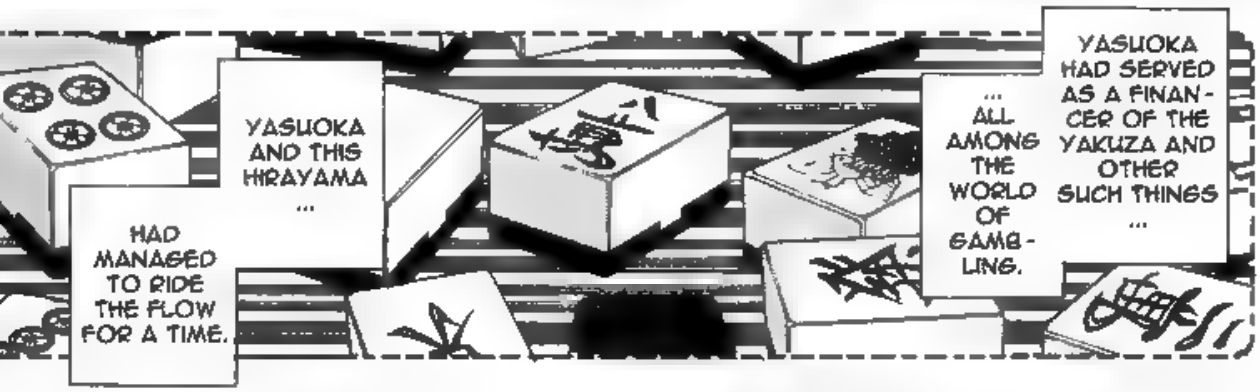
..TO TRY AND IDENTIFY THE MYSTERIOUS CORPSE.
IT IS NOW YASU-OKA'S TURN ...
SENPA! ...


I'M SURE OF IT.
SENPA ...!

THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT T ...
THIS MAN S HIRAYAMA YUKIO
HUH ..?

警視庁

..HAD FOUGHT TOGETHER FOR A SHORT TIME
YASUOKA AND THIS HIRAYAMA YUKIO, SEVEN MONTHS AGO ...
.....


YASUOKA AND THIS HIRAYAMA ...
HAD MANAGED TO RIDE THE FLOW FOR A TIME.
... ALL AMONG THE WORLD OF GAMBLING.
YASUOKA HAD SERVED AS A FINANCER OF THE YAKUZA AND OTHER SUCH THINGS ...

THE MAN FOUND BURIED BENEATH THE SOIL ON THAT NIGHT...
YES ...
YASUOKA HAD ACTED AS THE MANAGER FOR THIS HIRAYAMA.
BUT PRIOR TO THAT, HE WAS SUPERB IN KNOWING WHAT TO DISCARD AND WHAT HANDS TO KEEP.
HIRAYAMA HIT ROCK BOTTOM QUICKLY AND ABRUPTLY .
IN THE END, AFTER HE HAD BATTLED ENOUGH ...

...WAS NONE OTHER THAN THE FAKE AKAGI!

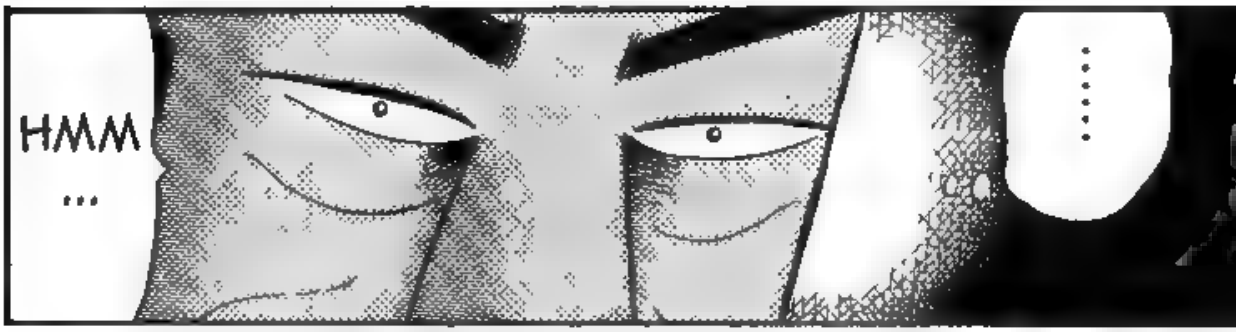
SENPAI ...
.....
.....

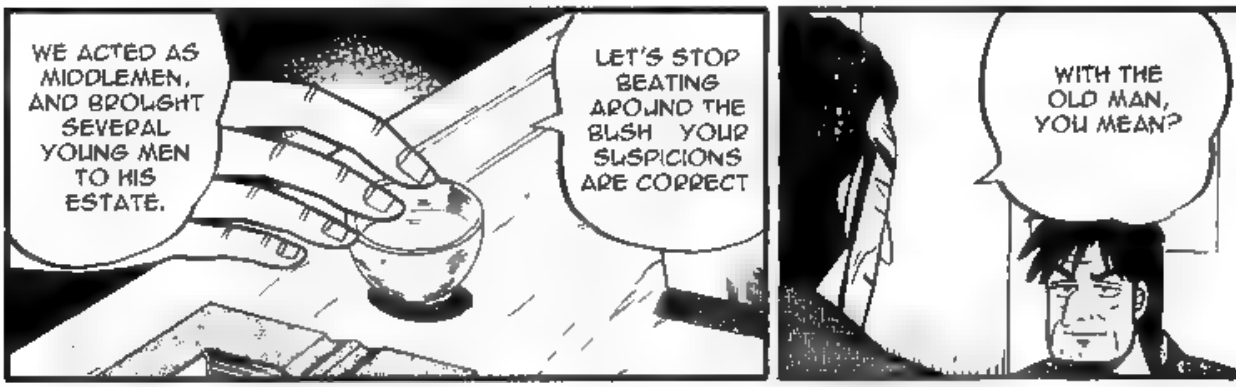
HOW COULD I ?!
OF COURSE I DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA ABOUT THAT!
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA!
DO YOU HAVE SOME IDEA OF WHY THAT MAN WAS KILLED. ?
HUH?
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT, SENPAI?

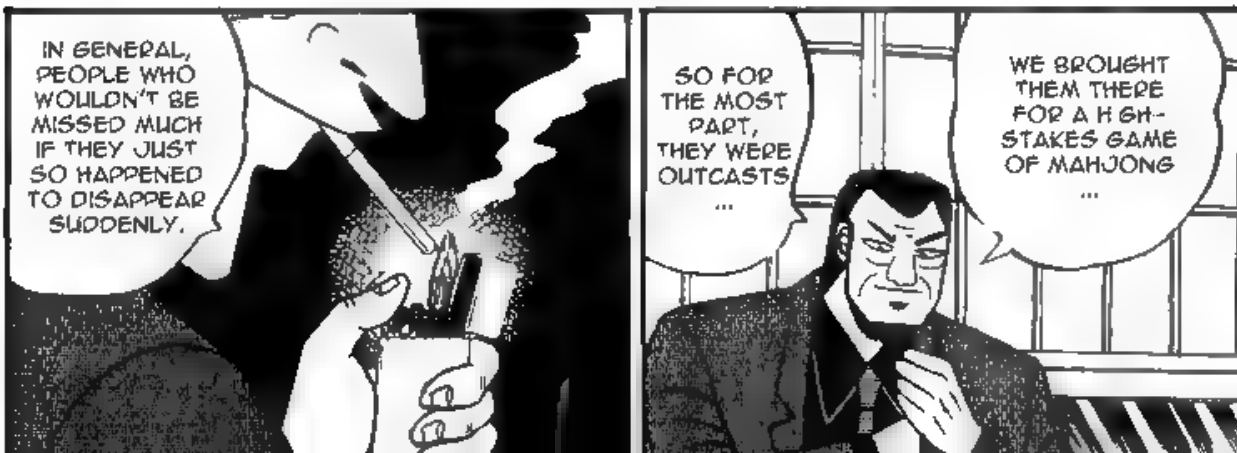
HE HAD NO IDEA ...
I'VE GOT NO MORE OF AN IDEA THAN YOU DO!
IN TRUTH, AT THE MOMENT ...
YASUOKA HAD BEEN CHASING AROUND A HUNCH IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND
AND WHILE THAT WAS WHAT HE SAID ...
..BY SIMPLY STATING THAT HE HAD NO FURTHER CLUES AS TO WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED TO THAT MAN.
AT THAT TIME, HE FENDED OFF HIS COLLEAGUE ...
HE HAD AN OUTSTANDING NOTION AS TO WHO IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN...
AT THIS MOMENT, YASUOKA ALREADY HAD AN IDEA..
THAT'S RIGHT ...
A SUSPICION ... AND A LEAD.
AND FROM HIS CHASING THIS HUNCH AROUND AND AROUND, A SINGLE THOUGHT BEGAN TO EMERGE...

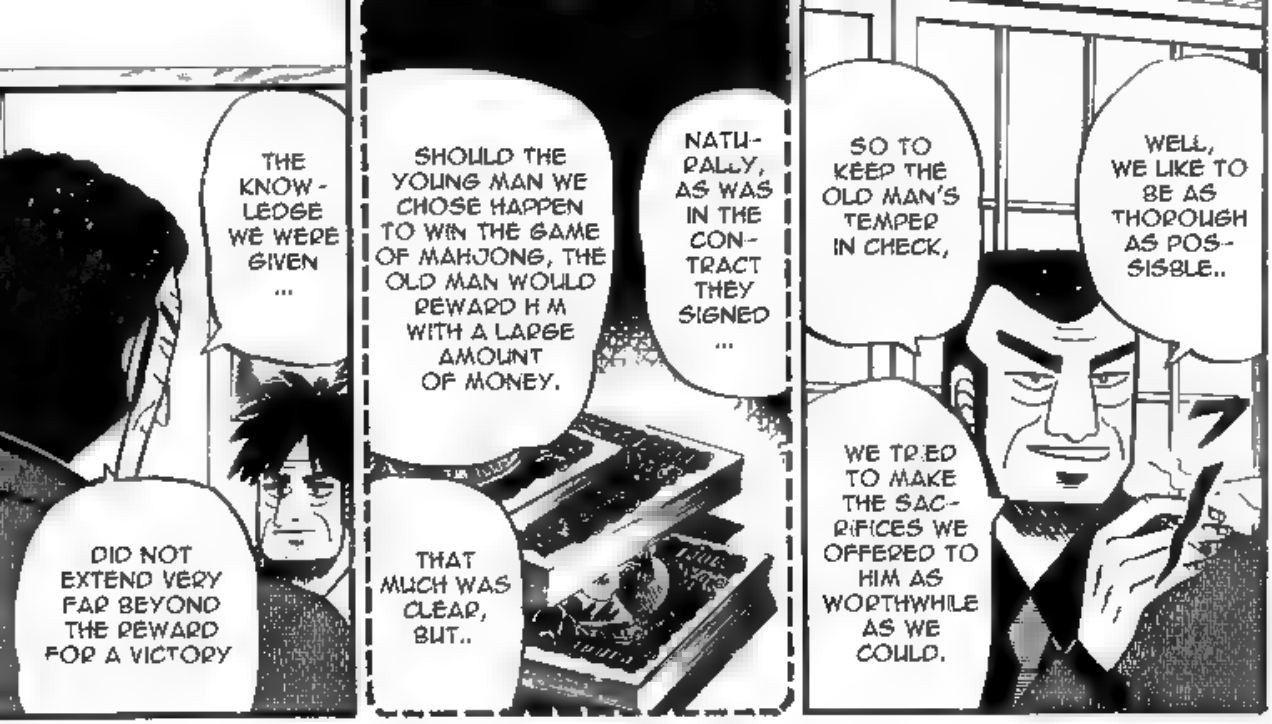
HE HAD A SUSPICION AS TO WHO THIS BIZARRE MURDERER WAS!

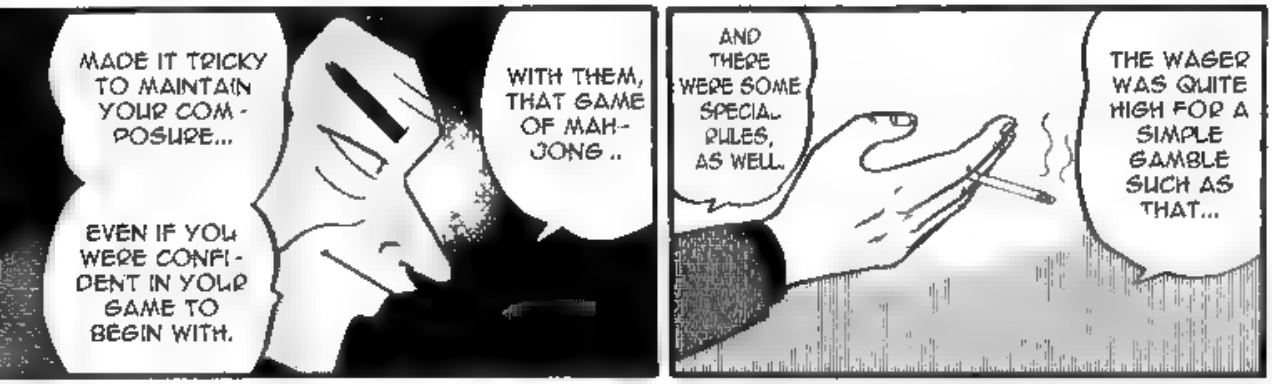
YOU USED A PHONE, DIDN'T YOU?
TO TALK WITH HIM.
...
SO, THEN ...
.....


HMM ...
.....


WE ACTED AS MIDDLEMEN, AND BROUGHT SEVERAL YOUNG MEN TO HIS ESTATE.
LET'S STOP BEATING AROUND THE BUSH YOUR SUSPICIONS ARE CORRECT
WITH THE OLD MAN, YOU MEAN?

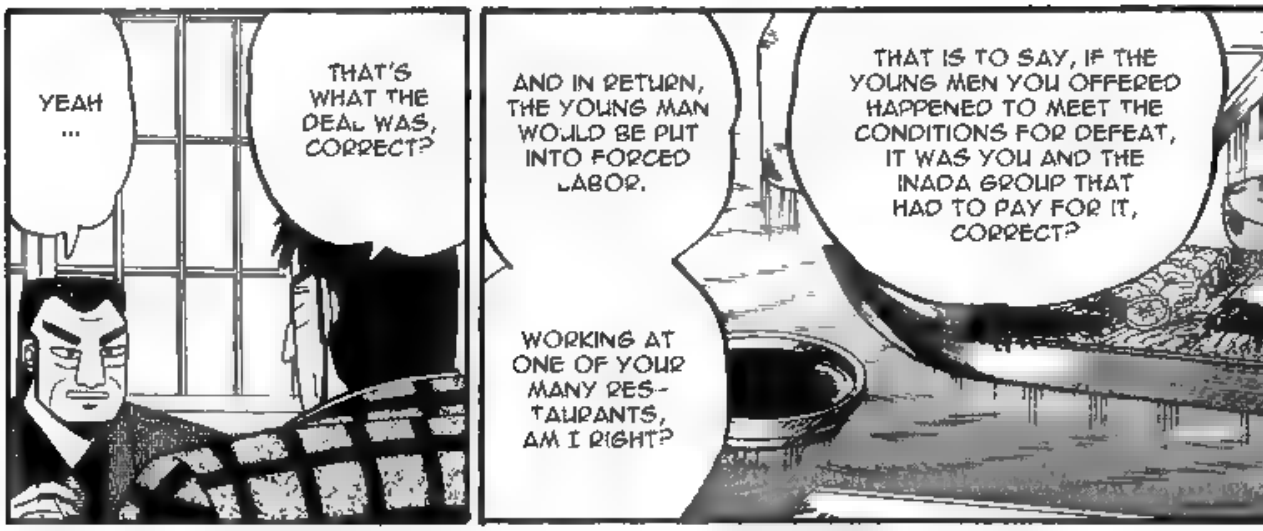

IN GENERAL, PEOPLE WHO WOULDN'T BE MISSED MUCH IF THEY JUST SO HAPPENED TO DISAPPEAR SUDDENLY.
SO FOR THE MOST PART, THEY WERE OUTCASTS ...
WE BROUGHT THEM THERE FOR A HIGH-STAKES GAME OF MAHJONG ...


THE KNOW-LEDGE WE WERE GIVEN ...
DID NOT EXTEND VERY FAR BEYOND THE REWARD FOR A VICTORY
SHOULD THE YOUNG MAN WE CHOSE HAPPEN TO WIN THE GAME OF MAHJONG, THE OLD MAN WOULD REWARD H M WITH A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY.
NATU-RALLY, AS WAS IN THE CON-TRACT THEY SIGNED ...
THAT MUCH WAS CLEAR, BUT..
SO TO KEEP THE OLD MAN'S TEMPER IN CHECK,
WELL, WE LIKE TO BE AS THOROUGH AS POS-SISBLE..
WE TRIED TO MAKE THE SAC-RIFICES WE OFFERED TO HIM AS WORTHWHILE AS WE COULD.


MADE IT TRICKY TO MAINTAIN YOUR COM-POSURE...
EVEN IF YOU WERE CONFI-DENT IN YOUR GAME TO BEGIN WITH.
WITH THEM, THAT GAME OF MAH-JONG ..
AND THERE WERE SOME SPECIAL RULES, AS WELL.
THE WAGER WAS QUITE HIGH FOR A SIMPLE GAMBLE SUCH AS THAT...

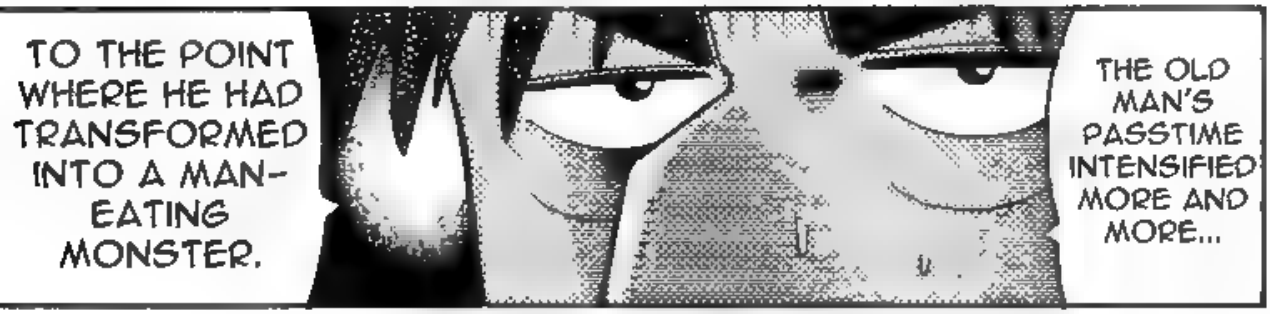
.....
IT'S A GAME OF MAHJONG THAT POOR PEOPLE COULD NEVER HOPE TO OVERCOME.
WAS TRULY UNMER-CIFAL.
IN THE END, THAT MAN'S GAME OF MAHJONG, ONE WITH DANGER EVER LOOMING CLOSE BEHIND ...
MAYBE HE GOT TIRED OF HIS OWN LITTLE GAME, HMM?
ALTHOUGH, AS OF RECENT, THE OLD MAN HASN'T BEEN ASKING US FOR ANY MORE SACRIFICES .
YOU WOULD NEED TO HAVE A STRONG F NANCIAL BACKBONE TO W N.

IT WAS YOUR JOB TO DEAL WITH WHAT HAPPENED TO THE YOUNG MEN AFTERWARDS, CORRECT?
TO FOLLOW WHAT YOU JUST SAID, OHGI-SAN ...
:
?
YOU REALLY THINK SO?
I SUPPOSE HE JUST LOST INTEREST


YEAH ...
THAT'S WHAT THE DEAL WAS, CORRECT?
AND IN RETURN, THE YOUNG MAN WOULD BE PUT INTO FORCED LABOR.
WORKING AT ONE OF YOUR MANY RES-TAURANTS, AM I RIGHT?
THAT IS TO SAY, IF THE YOUNG MEN YOU OFFERED HAPPENED TO MEET THE CONDITIONS FOR DEFEAT, IT WAS YOU AND THE INADA GROUP THAT HAD TO PAY FOR IT, CORRECT?

JUST AS I THOUGHT ...
FOUR, MAYBE FIVE MONTHS AGO?
.....
SO, THEN, WHEN DID THIS OLD MAN YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT STOP CALLING YOU UP FOR MORE PEOPLE TO PLAY WITH?

REPORTS ..?
TO CLARIFY ...
. WHEN REPORTS OF MISSING YOUTHS STARTED TO POUR IN
HUH ..?
THAT'S RIGHT AROUND THE TIME THAT IT HAPPENED ...
THAT WOULD MATCH UP PERFECTLY ...
JUST AS YOU THOUGHT ..?


TO THE POINT WHERE HE HAD TRANSFORMED INTO A MAN-EATING MONSTER.
THE OLD MAN'S PASSTIME INTENSIFIED MORE AND MORE...

IT GREW BEYOND WHAT HE COULD REASONABLY EXPECT YOU TO HELP WITH
AND THOUGH YOU AND YOUR GROUP HAD BEEN A GREAT HELP TO HIM IN HIS VICES ...
AND MORE THAN THAT, HE BEGAN TO CRAVE THEIR DESTRUC-TION
THE YOUNG MEN WHO CHASED AFTER HIS HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF YEN MET ONLY RUIN.

NO ...
THIS OLD MAN. .
OHGI-SAN ...
NO WAY . ?!
URGH ..!!
ONE OF HIS VICTIMS WAS RECENTLY FOUND DEAD IN THE TAMA MOUNTAIN REGION.

..WITH A MONSTER OF OUR OWN!
THIS MONSTER ...
I WAS THINKING IT WOULD BE THE RIGHT THING IF WE TOOK HIM DOWN...
MON-STER ..?
YES.
AKAGI SHIGERU!
WE'LL PUT HIM UP AGAINST A MONSTER THAT NO ONE CAN DEFEAT ...

CHAPTER 58 - FIRE POWER
第58話 火力

AKAGI SHIGERU WILL FIGHT FOR US!

CHO-HAN: A TRADITIONAL JAPANESE GAMBLING GAME WHERE PLAYERS BET ON WHETHER THE ADDED TOTAL OF TWO DICE WILL BE ODD OR EVEN. ORGANIZED SIMILAR TO MODERN-DAY CRAPS.

AND EVEN THOUGH THEIR CHOSEN GAME FOR THE HOUSE WAS CHO-HAN ...
AS I HEAR ...
THERE, THEY TEND TO PLAY SIMPLE GAMBLES FOR RECORDED REWARDS...
· THAT CAME FROM THE GAMBLING HOUSE OF AN AFFILIATE OF OURS.
THERE WAS A RUMOR THAT I OVERHEARD ...
THAT'S THE RUMOR.
HE ACCEPTS SOME PRETTY CRAZY GAMBLES WITH OPEN ARMS, BUT HE DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY BACKUP.
HE LOOKS LIKE SOME KID OFF THE STREET, AND SEEMS TO BE AROUND 20 YEARS OLD OR SO.
THERE'S A YOUNG MAN THERE WHO WINS EVERY SINGLE TIME HE PLAYS.
BUT IN THE END, I COULDN'T FIND ANYONE.
I TRIED LOOKING AROUND FOR SOMEONE LIKE THAT ...
AKAGI SHIGERU, HMM..
HOWEVER ...
I HAVEN'T HEARD OF ANY GANGS WITH REP PLAYERS AT ALL RESEMBLING THE KIND OF GAMEPLAY HE'S KNOWN FOR.
EVEN WITH ALL OF MY RESOURCES.

.....
BUT I'D SAY IT'S WORTH A TRY, AT THE LEAST.

HAH-HAH ...
I HAVE TO ADMIT, I'M A BIT SKEPTICAL ABOUT THAT ...

SO, THEN, WHICH ASSOCIATE IS THIS, EXACTLY?
THE KURATA GROUP, IN CHIBA.
THEIR GAMBLING HOUSE IS IN BUSINESS ON THE SECOND AND FOURTH SATURDAYS OF EVERY MONTH
THAT'S THEIR SCHEDULE.

IF WHAT YOU SAID IS TRUE...
BUT, YASUORA-SAN ...
OF COURSE, THERE'S NOT A PROBLEM THERE.
ALL RIGHT, CAN YOU TAKE ME THERE?
IF THAT WAS THE OLD MAN'S DOING, THEN ...
ABOUT THE BODY THAT THEY FOUND IN THE TAMA MOUNTAINS ...
THE DEAD BODY JUST ADDS TO OUR CERTAINTY ON THAT POINT.
THAT'S AN UNDENIABLE TRUTH, FAR FROM A MERE BLUFF!
IT'S THE MOST DANGER-OUS KIND OF MAH-JONG.
IF AKAGI LOSES, HE WILL DIE!
ANY YOUNG PERSON WHO GOES UP AGAINST HIM,
..WILL BE LITERALLY RISKING THEIR LIFE IN A GAME OF MAHJONG!

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT AN OLD MAN WHO HAS NEVER KNOWN REAL DEFEAT, YOU KNOW
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY HIGH-STAKES GAMBLES THIS AKAGI HAS TAKEN PART IN..
HE'LL STILL FALL VICTIM TO HOMICIDE SHOULD HE LOSE THIS ONE GAME!

THIS AKAGI SHIGERU YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...
IS HE REALLY WILLING TO RISK HIS LIFE SO EASILY?

...

IS THAT ALL?

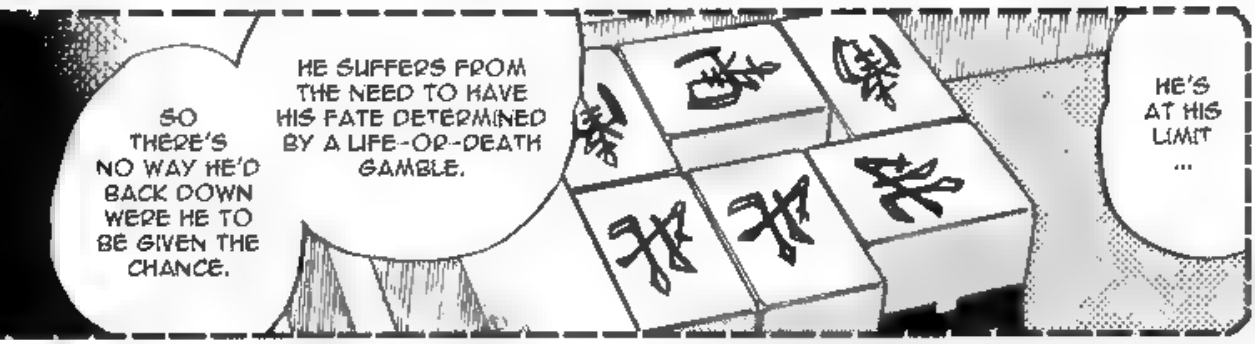
KAH-HAH ...
IF HE'S JUST A NORMAL PERSON LIKE THE REST OF THEM, THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN HANDLE IT!

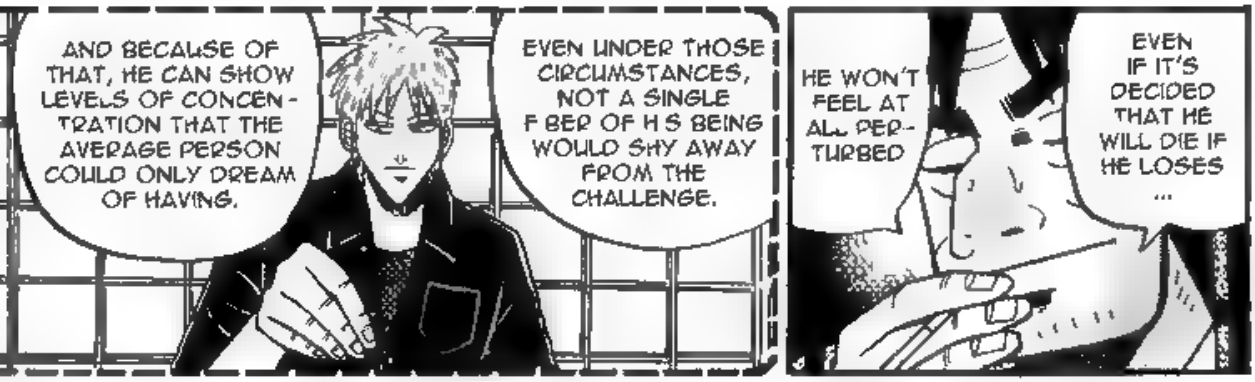
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HIM THAT GOES FAR BEYOND THAT.
I KNOW AKAGI, AND IF THERE'S ONE THING THAT HE CAN NEVER BE IN H.S WHOLE LIFE, IT'S A "NORMAL PERSON"

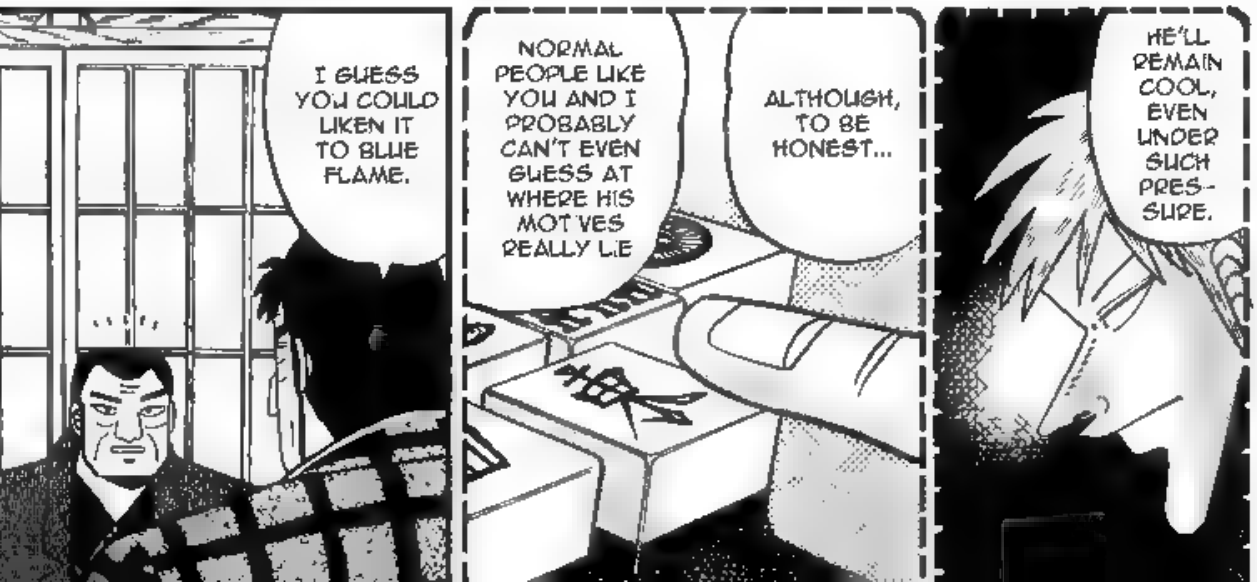
OHGI-SAN ...

BUT IN THIS CASE, THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM.
I UNDERSTAND WHERE YOUR CONCERN S COMING FROM ...

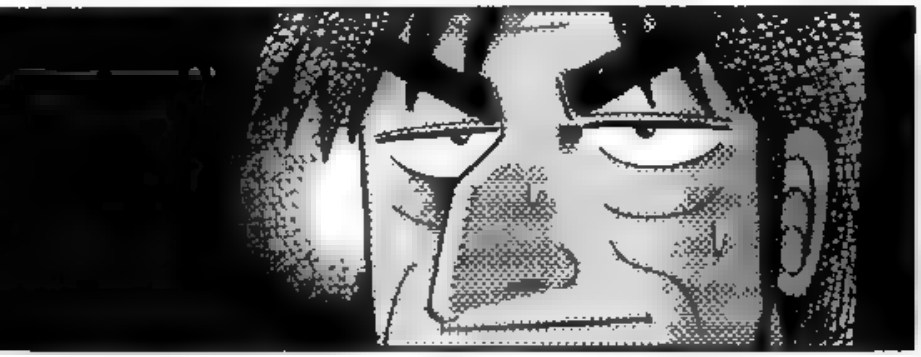
AND I CAN ONLY IMAGINE THAT HE'S SIMPLY GROWN TIRED OF LIVING.
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO PIN IT DOWN FOR A WHILE, NOW.
YOU HEARD ME.
FAR BEYOND BEING NORMAL ..?


SO THERE'S NO WAY HE'D BACK DOWN WERE HE TO BE GIVEN THE CHANCE.
HE SUFFERS FROM THE NEED TO HAVE HIS FATE DETERMINED BY A LIFE-OR-DEATH GAMBLE.
HE'S AT HIS LIMIT ...


AND BECAUSE OF THAT, HE CAN SHOW LEVELS OF CONCEN-TRATION THAT THE AVERAGE PERSON COULD ONLY DREAM OF HAVING.
EVEN UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, NOT A SINGLE F BER OF H S BEING WOULD SHY AWAY FROM THE CHALLENGE.
HE WON'T FEEL AT ALL PER-TURBED
EVEN IF IT'S DECIDED THAT HE WILL DIE IF HE LOSES ...


I GUESS YOU COULD LIKEN IT TO BLUE FLAME.
NORMAL PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND I PROBABLY CAN'T EVEN GUESS AT WHERE HIS MOT VES REALLY LIE
ALTHOUGH, TO BE HONEST...
HE'LL REMAIN COOL, EVEN UNDER SUCH PRES-SURE.

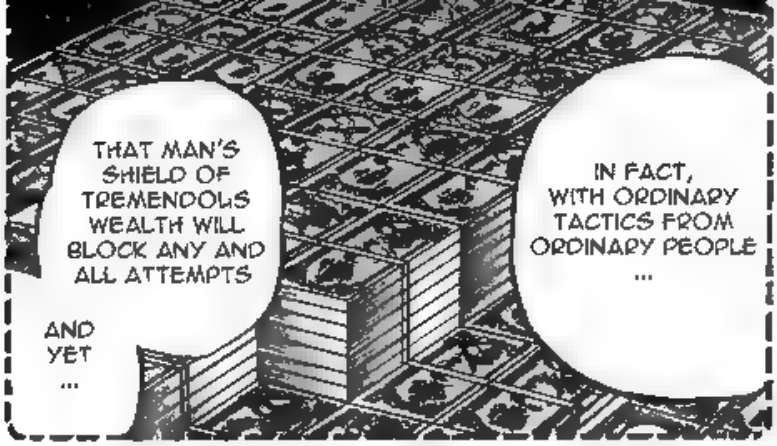
HIS FLAME CAN REACH EXTREMELY HIGH TEM - PERATURES, AND TURN BLUE!
HE'S A LONG WAY FROM THAT PRIMITIVE LEVEL OF FIRE ..
ORDINARY PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME, NO MATTER HOW HARD WE CONCENTRATE OR WHAT WE'RE DOING, CAN NEVER GET OUR FLAMES BURNING AT A HIGHER TEMPERATURE THAN IT TAKES TO GET A RED OR YELLOW FLAME
ON THE OTHER HAND ...
IF WE GET HIM TO FIGHT ...
EVEN RAW IRON IS SPLIT UP BY SUCH AN EXTREME LEVEL OF HEAT!
...THEN THE OLD MAN WILL BURN DOWN TO NOTHING UP AGAINST THAT LEVEL OF SHEER FIRE POWER!
...CAN REALLY DRIVE THE OLD MAN INTO A CORNER!
AKAGI ...
AND IN THAT CASE ...
HAH - HAH ...
. . . .
ONLY ONE OF THEM CAN REMAIN
EVEN THAT MADMAN WOULD CATCH A FEVER UP AGAINST THAT KIND OF HEAT



SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT AKAGI REALLY WILL DEFEAT THE OLD MAN ...?!
IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT...?!

THERE'S NO TELLING IF AKAGI CAN WIN OR NOT BEFORE IT HAPPENS
SINCE THE RULES FOR THE GAME ARE UNIQUE...

I CAN'T SAY I'M TOTALLY SURE ABOUT IT.
NO ...


THAT MAN'S SHIELD OF TREMENDOUS WEALTH WILL BLOCK ANY AND ALL ATTEMPTS
AND YET ...
IN FACT, WITH ORDINARY TACTICS FROM ORDINARY PEOPLE ...

. AND TO AN EXTENT, THE ONE WITH THE MOST MONEY WOULD LIKELY EVEN HAVE THE ADVANTAGE.
I'M NOT SURE IF HE'LL WIN ...

EVEN THAT IRON SHIELD MIGHT CRUMBLE APART!
AGAINST AKAGI'S FIRE, HOTTER THAN ANY OTHER KIND,

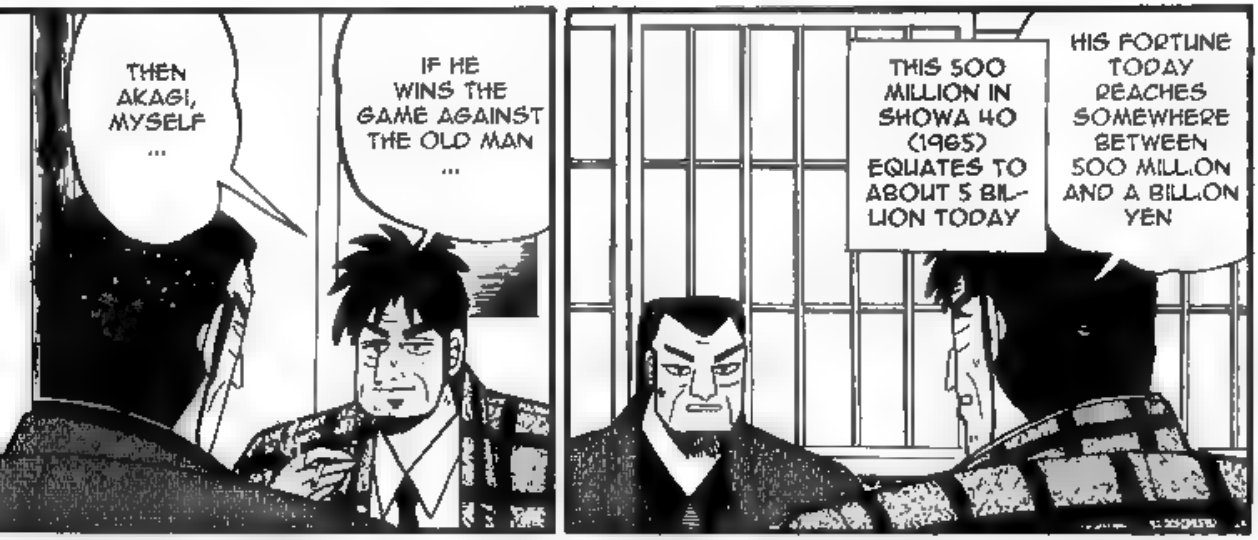
HE STILL MIGHT JUST COME OUT ON TOP!
..EVEN IF THE RULES ARE MADE SO THAT HE'S AT A MOUNTAINOUS DISADVANTAGE,

IF IT'S AKAGI SHIGERU PLAYING ...
.....

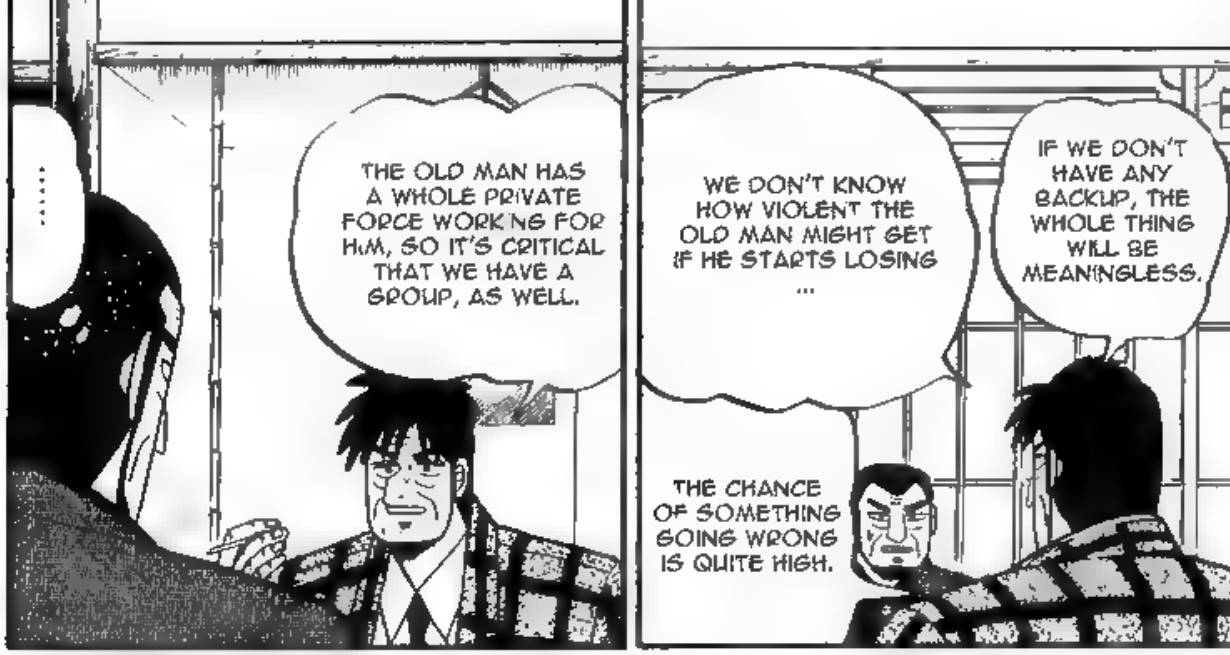
THAT'S RIGHT
ALL OF THEM .. ?!

THEN ALL OF THE OLD MAN'S WORLDLY POSESS ONS WILL BE HIS FOR THE TAKING!
AND IF HE DOES HAPPEN TO WIN ...
....

AS "KYOUSEI" GREW, HE WAS ABLE TO SAVE AND SAVE H.S MONEY OVER THE YEARS ...
HE WAS A PIONEER IN THE MANAGE - MENT OF CONSULTANCY FIRMS.
AFTER RETIRING FROM THE POLICE FORCE, THE OLD MAN REVIVED HIS BOUNTIFUL ENTERPRISE
..AND BY FINDING A WAY TO DODGE HIS TAXES TIME AND TIME AGAIN..


THEN AKAGI, MYSELF ...
IF HE WINS THE GAME AGAINST THE OLD MAN ...
THIS 500 MILLION IN SHOWA 40 (1965) EQUATES TO ABOUT 5 BIL- LION TODAY
HIS FORTUNE TODAY REACHES SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 500 MILLION AND A BILLION YEN

AKAGI SHOULD BE ABLE TO WIN ..
I'LL DO WHATEVER IS NEEDED TO PREPARE ...
BUT IF IT HAPPENS THAT THE OLD MAN DOES, NSTEAD ...
IN ORDER TO GET THIS BATTLE ON ITS FEET ...
. WE'LL MOST DEFINITELY NEED TO HAVE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE OLD MAN!
.....
AND ALSO YOU, OHGI- SAN ...
..WILL GET EQUAL CUTS OF THE MONEY!

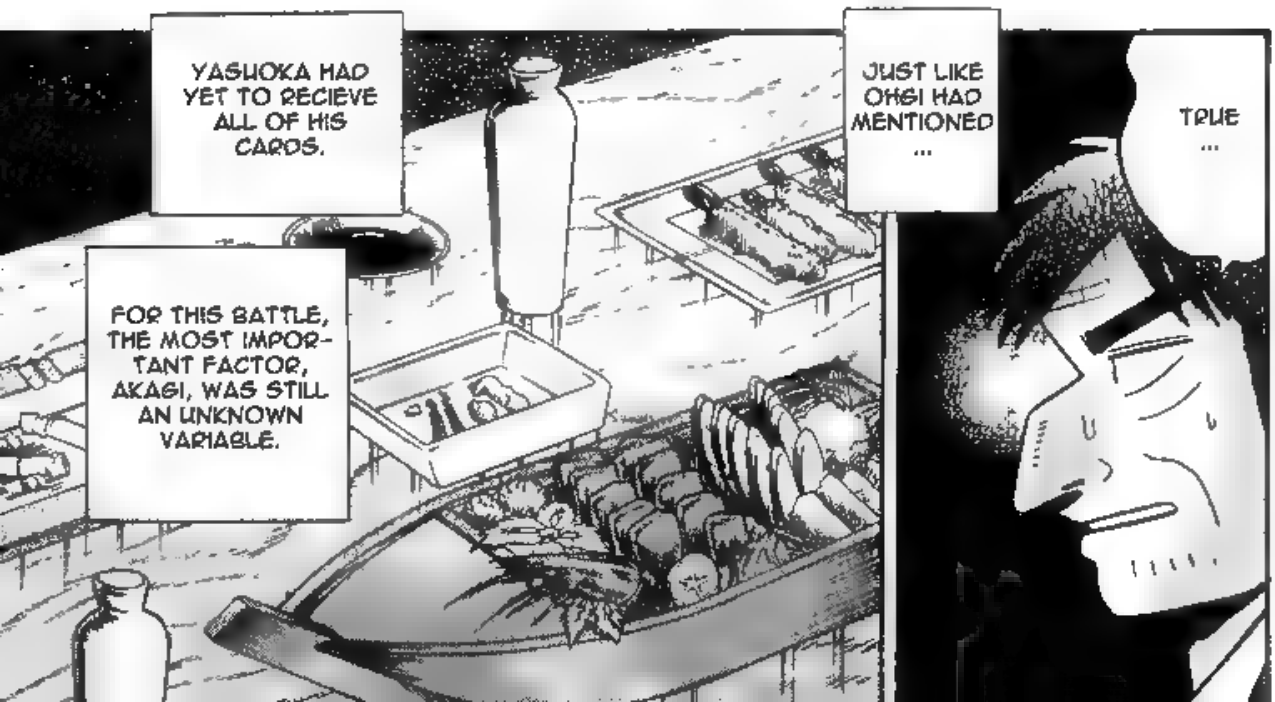

THE OLD MAN HAS A WHOLE PRIVATE FORCE WORKING FOR HIM, SO IT'S CRITICAL THAT WE HAVE A GROUP, AS WELL.
.....
WE DON'T KNOW HOW VIOLENT THE OLD MAN MIGHT GET IF HE STARTS LOSING ...
IF WE DON'T HAVE ANY BACKUP, THE WHOLE THING WILL BE MEANINGLESS.
THE CHANCE OF SOMETHING GOING WRONG IS QUITE HIGH.

YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IF AKAGI CAN WIN OR NOT...?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU SAYING?
SO, OHGI-SAN, IF YOU CAN GET THE INADA GROUP TO HELP US OUT WITH THIS, THEN-

ISN'T THAT HOW IT IS?
HERE'S WHAT I'LL SAY.
HUHHHHH...
YEAH ...
.....
WE DON'T KNOW IF HE REALLY IS AKAGI OR NOT!
AND MORE THAN THAT, THE CHIBA THING IS STILL JUST A RUMOR.
IF HE'S NOT, ALL OF THIS PREPAR-ATION WILL HAVE BEEN WAS-TED!

THAT'S ALL.
ANYTHING WE TALK ABOUT BEFORE THEN IS NOTHING MORE THAN IDLE GOSSIP
WHETHER OR NOT I END UP AGREEING TO THIS ...
I WON'T MAKE MY DECISON UNTIL AFTER WE'VE DISCOVERED IF THE MAN REALLY IS AKAGI.

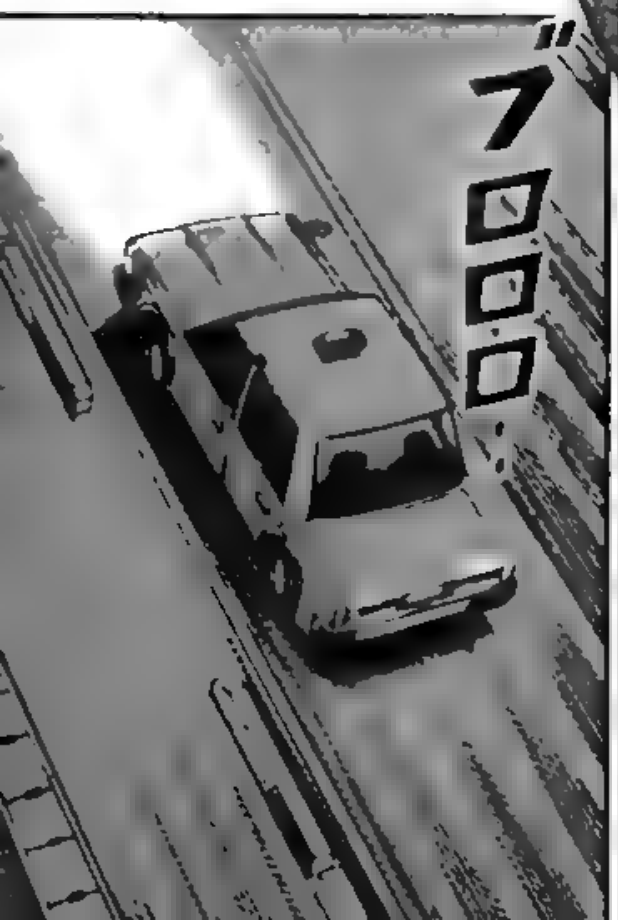
.....


YASUOKA HAD YET TO RECIEVE ALL OF HIS CARDS.
FOR THIS BATTLE, THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR, AKAGI, WAS STILL AN UNKNOWN VARIABLE.
JUST LIKE OHGI HAD MENTIONED ...
TRUE ...

FIRST, HE HAD TO FIND OUT WHAT HE HAD TO WORK WITH!

IF IT TURNS OUT NOT TO BE AKAGI, ALL OF YASUOKA'S PREPARATION WILL HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING.
...THE MYSTERIOUS MAN WHO MAY OR MAY NOT BE AKAGI HAD WON.
THAT MANY TIMES TO NOW, WHENEVER THE GAMBLING HOUSE OPENED ...
IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING ...

東勝浦駅
(東口)


ブロロロ…

WILL I ENCOUNTER THE LEGEN-DARY MAN ...THE GENIUS, AKAGI, BY SHEER CHANCE, AGAIN?

MEAN-
WHILE
AT THE
KURATA
HOUSE

ARE YOU
BETTING
ODD?!
OR
WILL IT
BE EVEN
?!

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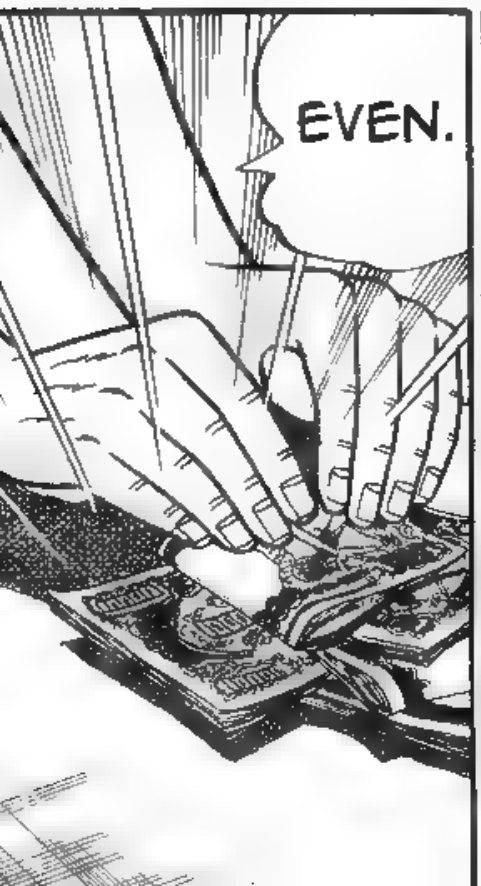
ざわ…


EVEN.

WHICH
WILL IT
BE?

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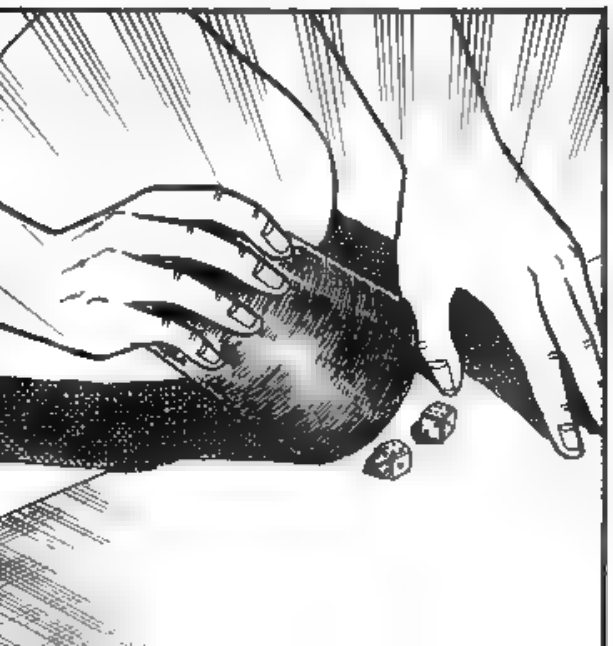
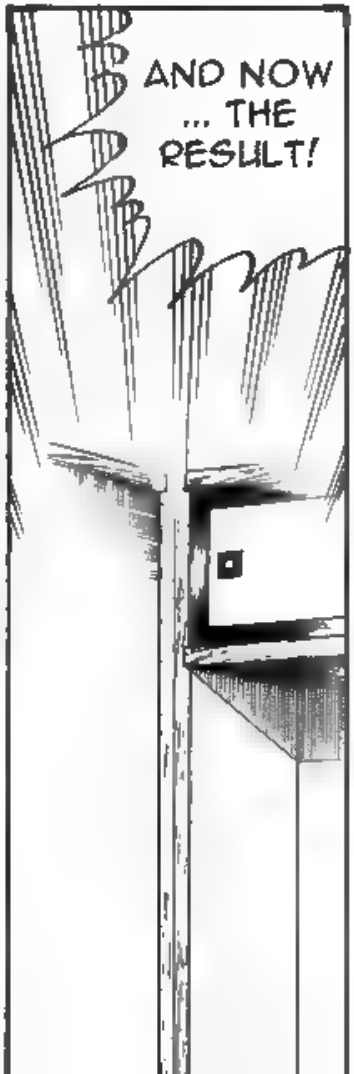
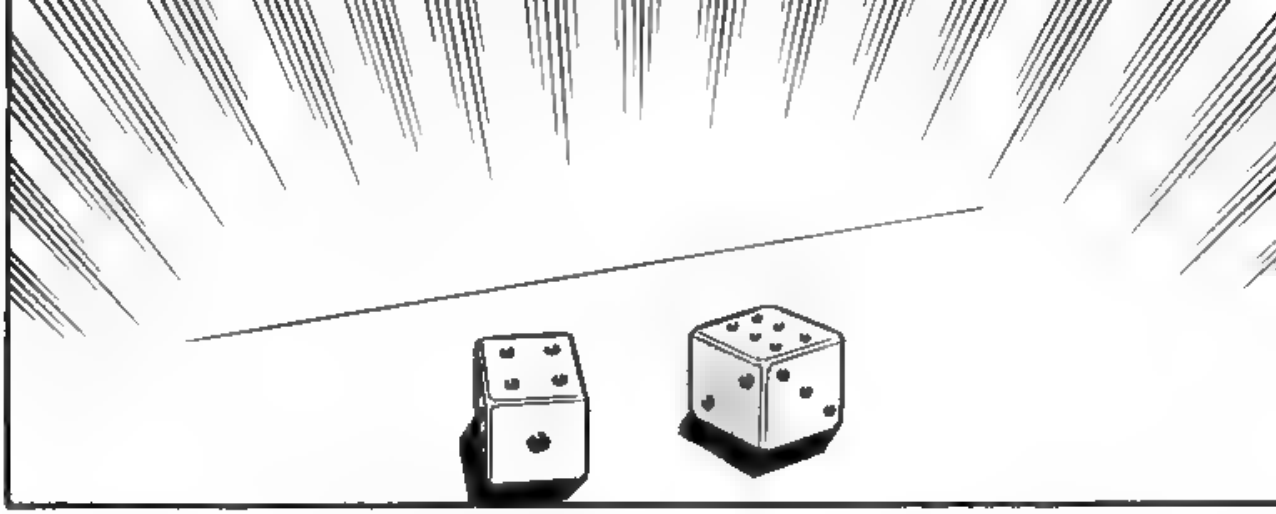
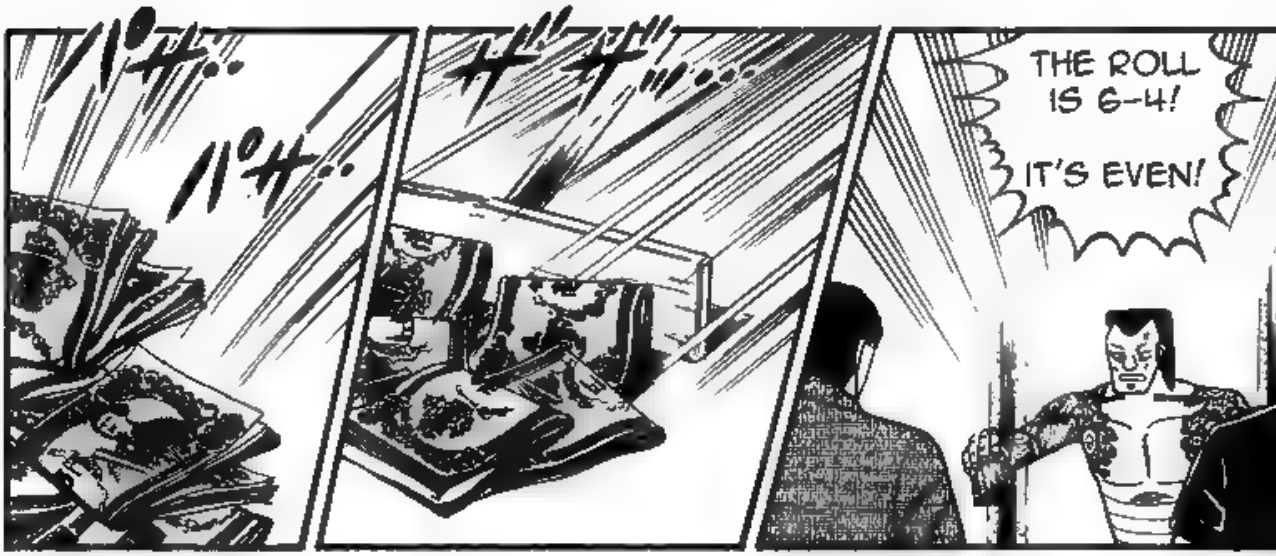
ざわ..
.....
.....
ざわ..
THE BETS HAVE BEEN MADE!



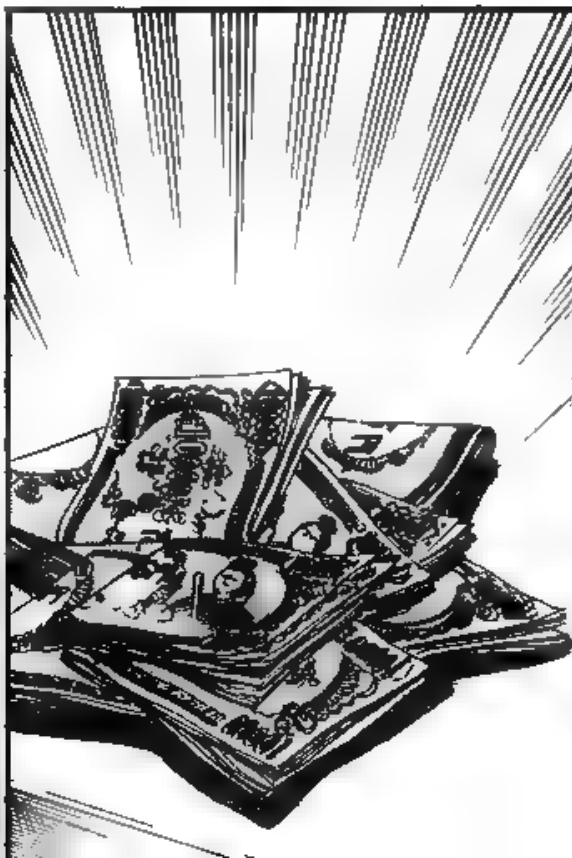

AND NOW ... THE RESULT!




THE ROLL IS 6-4!
IT'S EVEN!

KH ...!!
.....

CHO-HAN...



...AND ALL THE CUSTOMERS BATTLE IT OUT AMONGST THEMSELVES.
ONE SIMPLY BETS ON THE OUT-COME OF THE DICE BETWEEN EVEN AND ODD...
ガタ...
...IS NOT A GAME ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON'S STRUGGLE AGAINST THE HOUSE
...AND CONSE-QUENTLY DO NOT GENERALLY CARE WHICH OF THEIR CUSTOMERS ENDS UP WINNING IN A GIVEN ROLL.
IT IS, OF COURSE, FUN-DAMENTAL THAT THEY DO NOT TAKE PART IN THE GAME, THEMSELVES...
HOW-EVER ...
..USUALLY ONLY 5-10% OF THE WINNINGS.
THE ORGA-NIZERS OF THE GAME TAKE A SMALL CUT OF THE WIN-NINGS FOR THEMSELVES ...
INEVITABLY, IN THE FACE OF THAT, LARGE AMOUNTS OF OTHER GUESTS WILL END UP GOING BROKE.
AND ONCE THAT HAP-PENS, THE GUESTS TEND TO LEAVE.
WHEN ALL OF THE WINS ARE FOCUSED ON A SINGLE PATRON...
THE EVENT OF A SINGLE GUEST MAKING AN ABSURD AMOUNT OF VICTORIES BY HIMSELF ...
...IS NOT AT ALL DESI-RABLE.

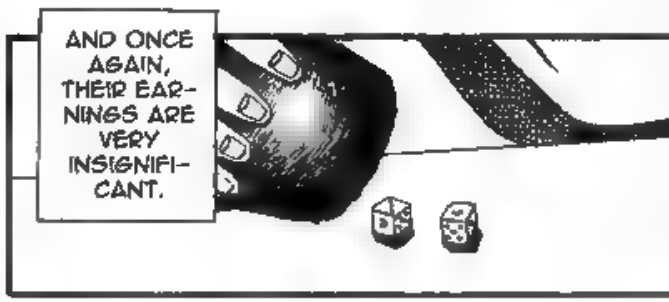
...HAS BECOME VERY CLOSELY WATCHED BY THE ORGANIZERS.
IN REALITY, THIS YOUNG MAN...
THIS IS BECAUSE HE IS LOSING THEM CUSTOMERS.

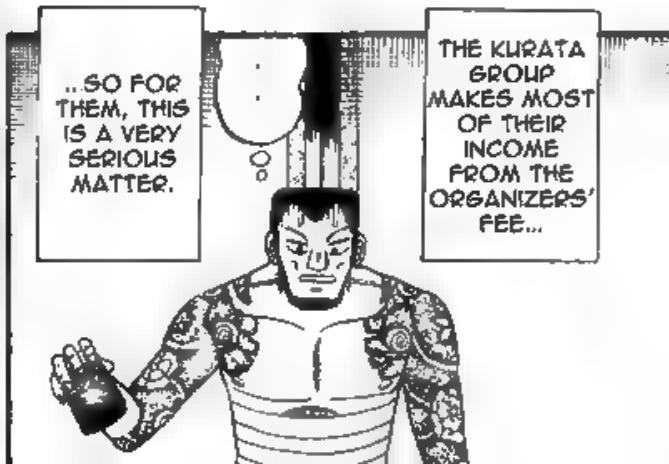
THE HOUSE ENDS UP PROFITING LESS.
AND THE FEWER GUESTS THERE ARE, THE LOWER THE ORGANIZER'S FEE GETS.

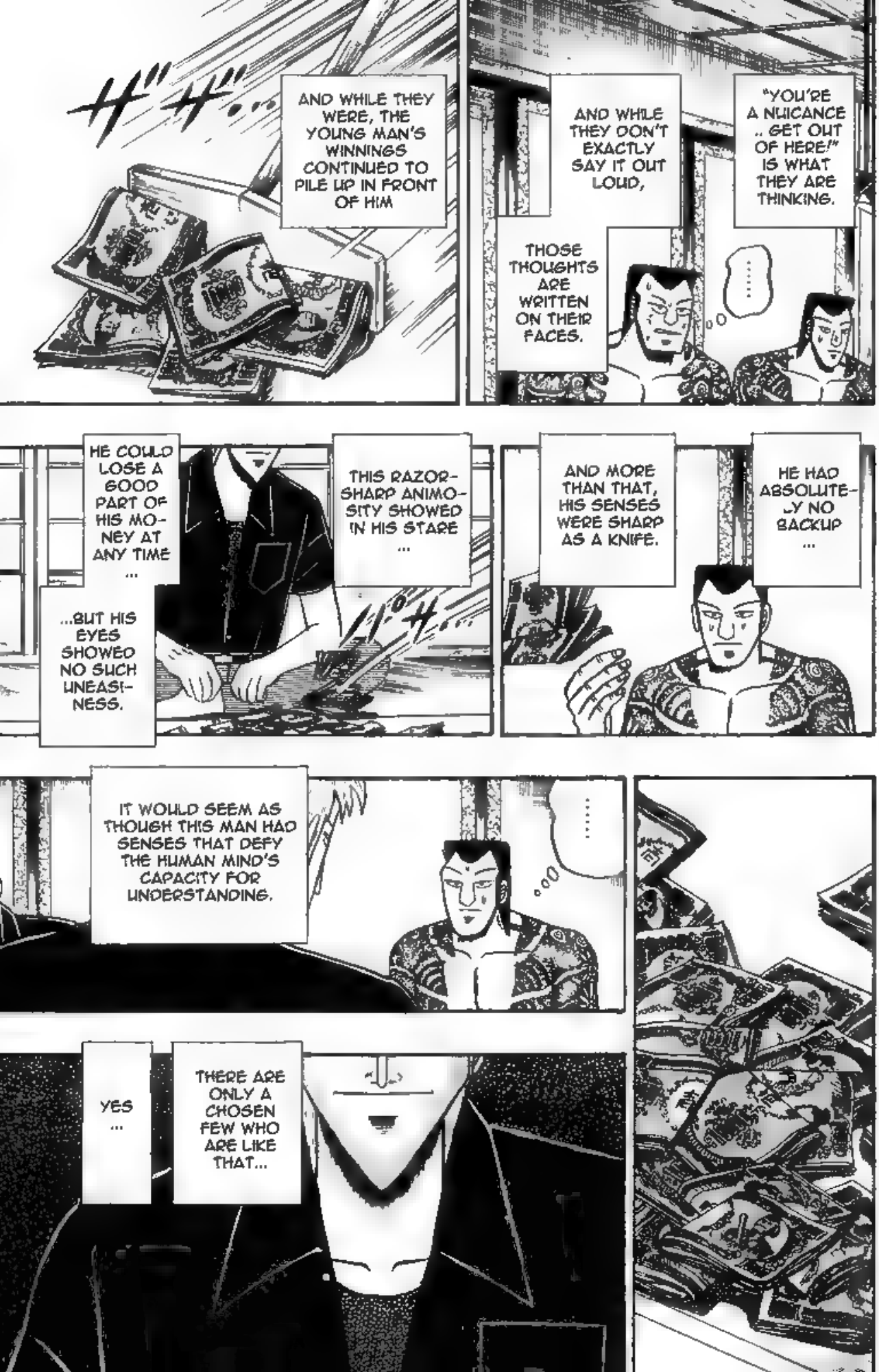
AND NOW, THE RESULT ...!!

HAS AROUND 50% OF THE GUESTS THAT IT USUALLY DOES
AT PRESENT, THE GAMBLING HOUSE ...

THE KURATA GROUP, TOO, IS BEGINNING TO SHOW SOME SIGNS OF DISCOMFORT.
EVEN THEY ARE APPROACHING THEIR LIMIT.
1-3... EVEN ...!!


AND ONCE AGAIN, THEIR EARNINGS ARE VERY INSIGNIFICANT.


..SO FOR THEM, THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER.
THE KURATA GROUP MAKES MOST OF THEIR INCOME FROM THE ORGANIZERS' FEE...


AND WHILE THEY WERE, THE YOUNG MAN'S WINNINGS CONTINUED TO PILE UP IN FRONT OF HIM
AND WHILE THEY DON'T EXACTLY SAY IT OUT LOUD,
"YOU'RE A NUICANCE .. GET OUT OF HERE!" IS WHAT THEY ARE THINKING.
THOSE THOUGHTS ARE WRITTEN ON THEIR FACES.
.....
HE COULD LOSE A GOOD PART OF HIS MONEY AT ANY TIME ...
...BUT HIS EYES SHOWED NO SUCH UNEASINESS.
THIS RAZOR-SHARP ANIMOSITY SHOWED IN HIS STARE ...
AND MORE THAN THAT, HIS SENSES WERE SHARP AS A KNIFE.
HE HAD ABSOLUTELY NO BACKUP ...
IT WOULD SEEM AS THOUGH THIS MAN HAD SENSES THAT DEFY THE HUMAN MIND'S CAPACITY FOR UNDERSTANDING.
.....
YES ...
THERE ARE ONLY A CHOSEN FEW WHO ARE LIKE THAT...

THE YOUNG MAN IS, INDEED, AKAGI SHIGERU!

CHAPTER 59 - VIOLENCE

第59話 暴挙

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.....
IT IS TREMENDOUS!
IN MODERN TIMES, THIS SUM WOULD AMOUNT TO OVER 200 MILLION YEN..
TO THIS POINT, THE AMOUNT OF MONEY HE HAS WON FROM THE KURATA GROUP AND THEIR CUSTOMERS AMOUNTS TO OVER 20 MILLION YEN
IF IT WERE NOT FOR HIM, THEY WOULD HAVE GAINED 6 MILLION YEN TO THIS POINT
...HE HAS CAUSED THE KURATA GROUP TO LOSE OUT ON MONEY DUE TO HIS ONE-SIDED VICTORIES.
AND, BY ASSIMILATING THIS 20 MILLION YEN...
A FAR CRY FROM A NORMAL AMOUNT TO GAIN THROUGH CHO-HAN.
HE HAS AMOUNTED A HUGE SUM OF CASH.
AND OVER THE SIX TIMES THAT HE HAS BEEN SEEN HERE...
AKAGI HAS BEEN GAMBLING HERE EVERY OTHER SATURDAY FOR THE PAST 3 MONTHS..
HIS WINS ARE LARGE AND INCESSANT.
THIS HOUSE IS ONE THAT SPECIALIZES IN CHO-HAN.
IT IS AUGUST 14TH, AT THE KURATA GAMBLING HOUSE.
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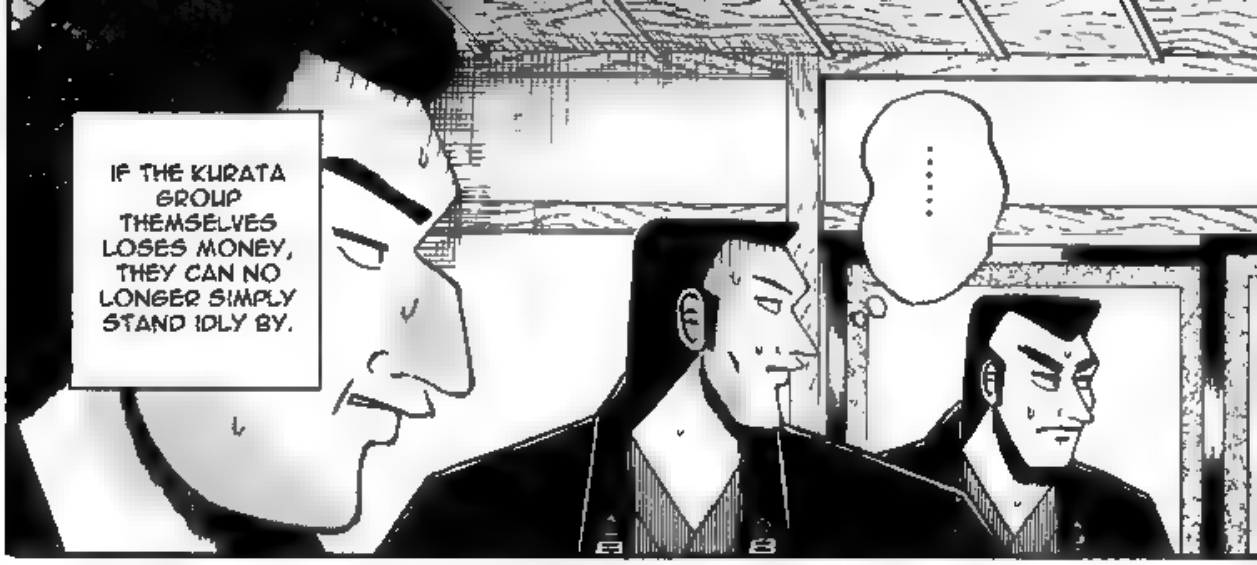
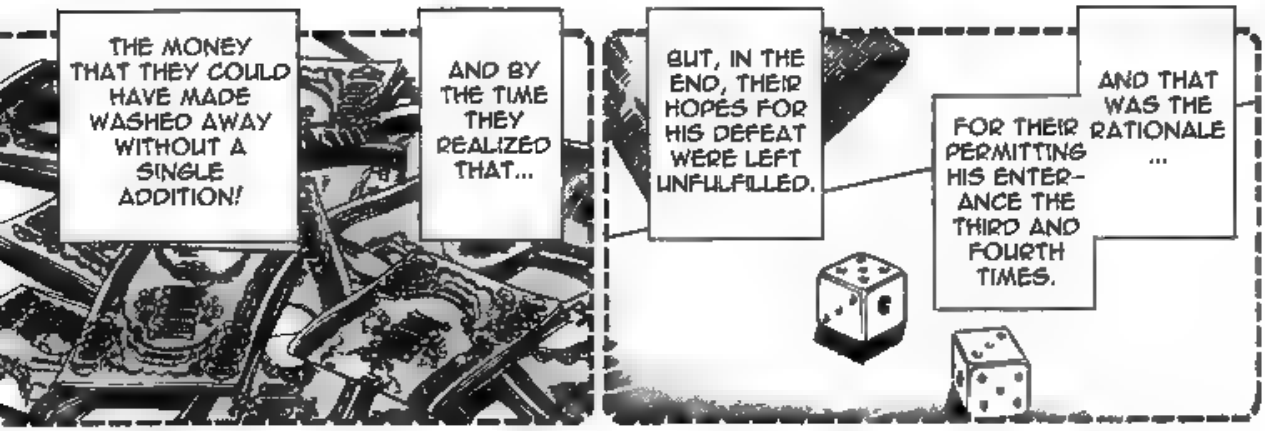


BUT THEY ARE LEFT WITH NO CHOICE BUT TO GIVE UP MORE AND MORE MONEY!
IT SEEMS TO THEM AS IF THEY ARE SIMPLY THROWING MONEY AWAY ..
THE ORGANIZERS' EARNINGS, THEREFORE, HAVE ALSO BEEN GREATLY REDUCED.
EVER SINCE AKAGI ARRIVED, THE GUESTS HAVE BECOME FEWER AND FEWER.

T/N DAIGASHI THE YAKUZA POSITION IN CHARGE OF A GAMBLING HOUSE, WORKING FOR THE BOSS DIRECTLY

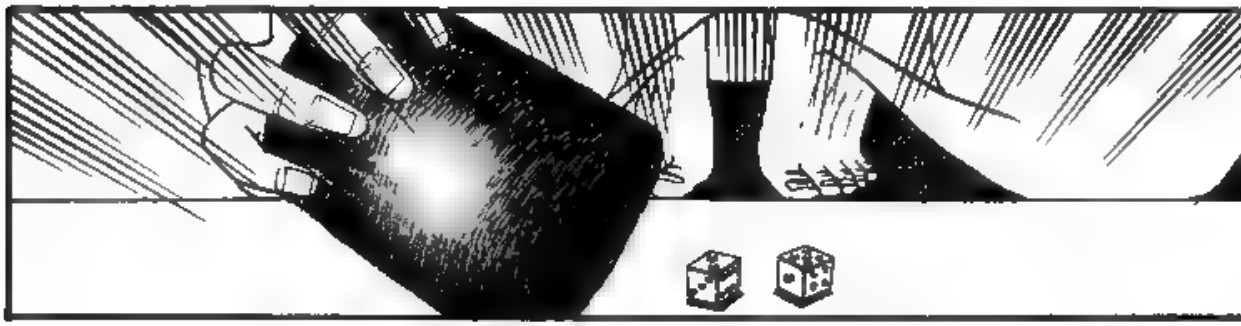
THEY WOULD FOCUS ON CRUSHING HIM NEXT TIME HE MADE AN APPEARANCE.
IT WAS JUDGED TO NOT BE ENOUGH TO FORCE HIM TO LEAVE AT THE TIME ...
IT HAD SEEMED AS THOUGH THERE WAS STILL A CHANCE FOR THE EARNINGS TO EVEN BACK OUT.
THOUGH IN HIS FIRST TWO APPEARANCES AKAGI HAD INDEED WON AT THE SAME RATE AS NOW..
THEY HANDLED IT IN THE SAME WAY THAT THEY WOULD FOR ANY EVENT RESULTING IN LOWER INCOME.


THE MONEY THAT THEY COULD HAVE MADE WASHED AWAY WITHOUT A SINGLE ADDITION!
AND BY THE TIME THEY REALIZED THAT...
BUT, IN THE END, THEIR HOPES FOR HIS DEFEAT WERE LEFT UNFULFILLED.
FOR THEIR PERMITTING HIS ENTERANCE THE THIRD AND FOURTH TIMES.
AND THAT WAS THE RATIONALE ...

IT WAS AS IF THE MONEY PLAYED NO PART IN HIS MOTIVATION.
HE HAD ALREADY PASSED THE POINT WHERE THAT REASONABLE TACTIC WOULD BE OF ANY USE.
HE WOULD NOT QUIT WHILE HE WAS AHEAD...
AND MORE AND MORE, THEY BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT AKAGI WOULD NOT LEAVE THEM ALONE OF HIS OWN ACCORD.
THEY NO LONGER HAD A CHOICE BUT TO TAKE ACTION, AND USE DRASTIC MEASURES!
THE TIME HAD COME.
THIS WAS A DISGRACE TO THE KURATA GROUP

.....
Ooo
NO MATTER WHAT, THEY HAD TO CRUSH HIM!
THAT IS BE-CAUSE ...
WILL THE DICE SHOW EVEN?! OR WILL IT BE ODD ?!
NOW THEN, PLACE YOUR BETS, PLACE YOUR BETS!
IT WAS THEIR VOCA-TION.
THIS WAS THE CON-CENSUS REACHED BY THE KURATA GROUP...
THE GUESTS CAN ALSO TRY TO FOLLOW THE LOGICAL PROGRESSION OF DICE ROLLS FROM ONE TO THE NEXT...
EVEN!!
AND THAT IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT..
...IS NOT MERELY ABOUT GUESSING AT THE OUTCOME AND LEAVING IT ALL UP TO CHANCE.
...THIS INFREQUENT MEANS OF ESCAPE WHERE THE DICE MEAN EVERYTHING ...
THIS GAME OF CHO-HAN ...
ABOVE ALL, THE KURATA GROUP'S DICE GAMES, PLACED IN THE MOUN-TAINS..
...HAD TO BE KEPT GOING.
THE NEXT ROUND BEGINS NOW!

AND NOW, THE RESULT!
THE BETS HAVE BEEN MADE!
ODD!
THE ORGANIZERS CAN MANIPULATE THE OUTCOME OF THE DICE AT WILL!
EVEN!
EVEN!



2-5...
ODD!
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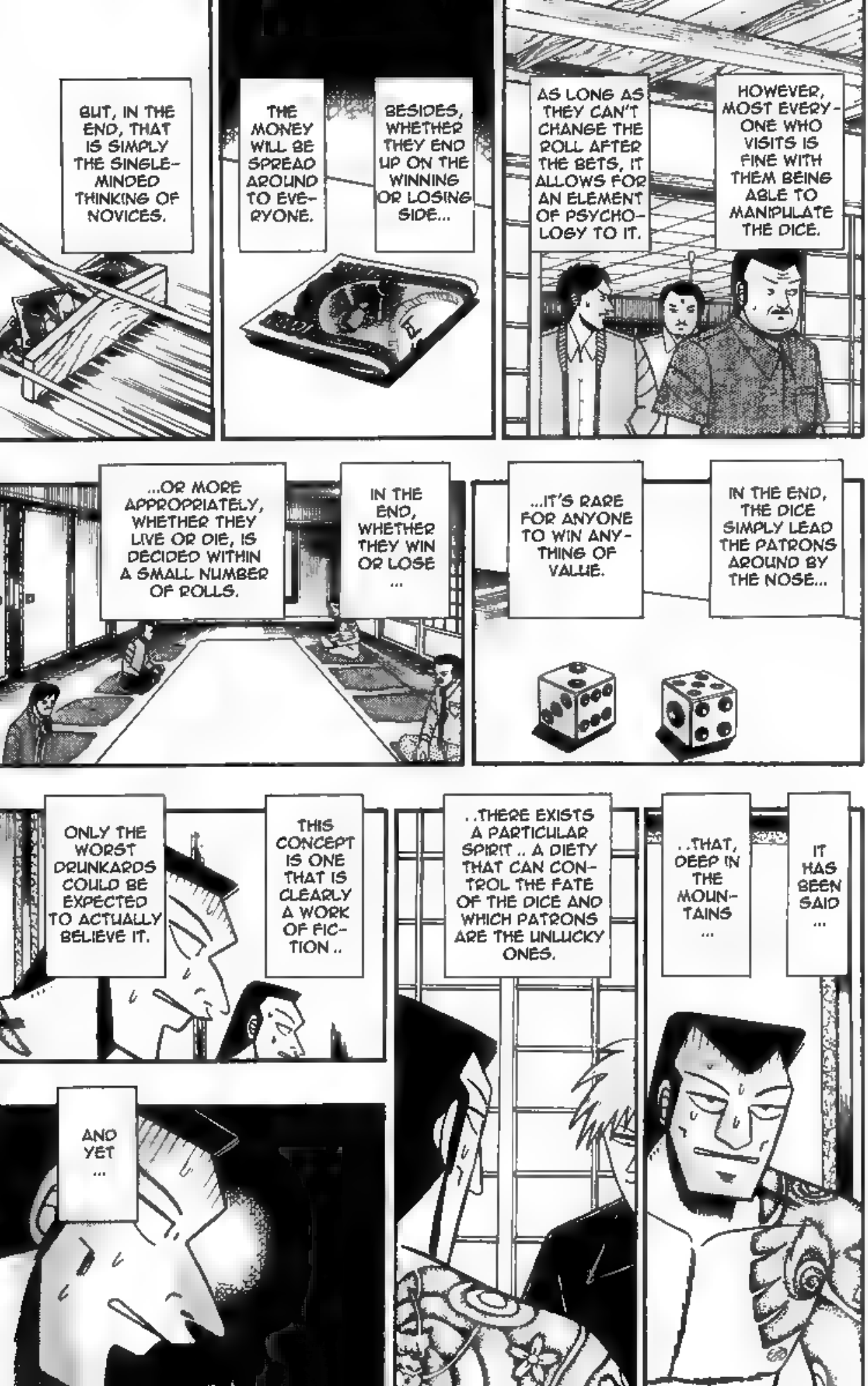
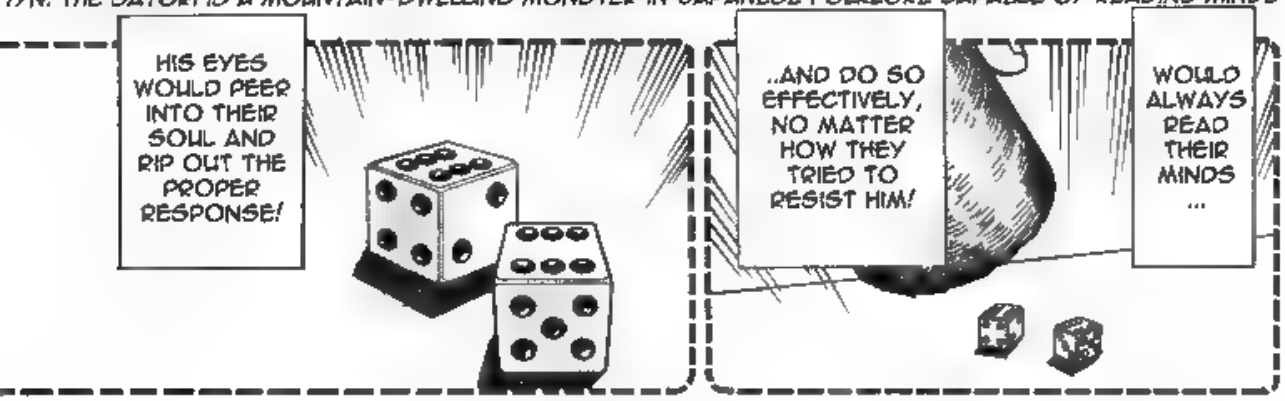
ざわ・・
ざわ・・
THE GUESTS OF THE HOUSE ARE WELL AWARE OF THIS.
OF COURSE ...
……
……
ガタッ
ガタッ

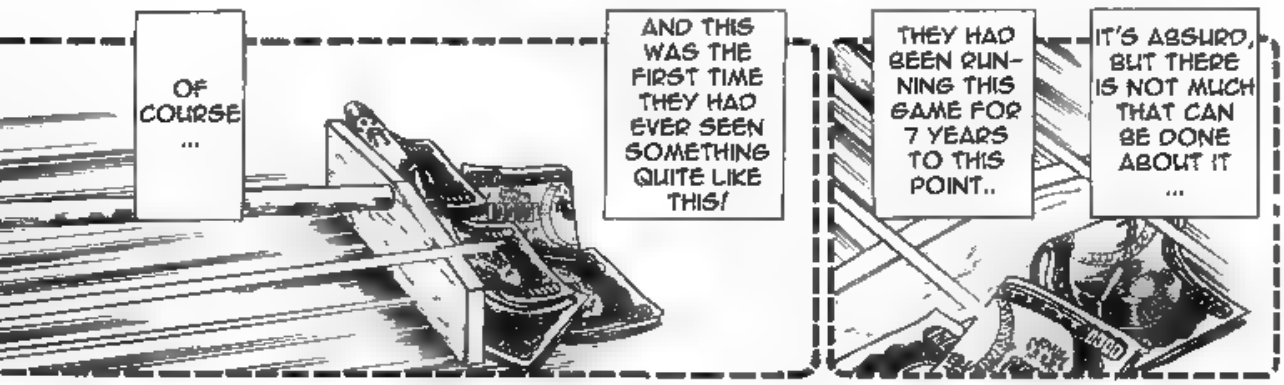

BUT, IN THE END, THAT IS SIMPLY THE SINGLE-MINDED THINKING OF NOVICES.
THE MONEY WILL BE SPREAD AROUND TO EVERYONE.
BESIDES, WHETHER THEY END UP ON THE WINNING OR LOSING SIDE...
AS LONG AS THEY CAN'T CHANGE THE ROLL AFTER THE BETS, IT ALLOWS FOR AN ELEMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY TO IT.
HOWEVER, MOST EVERYONE WHO VISITS IS FINE WITH THEM BEING ABLE TO MANIPULATE THE DICE.
...OR MORE APPROPRIATELY, WHETHER THEY LIVE OR DIE, IS DECIDED WITHIN A SMALL NUMBER OF ROLLS.
IN THE END, WHETHER THEY WIN OR LOSE ...
...IT'S RARE FOR ANYONE TO WIN ANYTHING OF VALUE.
IN THE END, THE DICE SIMPLY LEAD THE PATRONS AROUND BY THE NOSE...
ONLY THE WORST DRUNKARDS COULD BE EXPECTED TO ACTUALLY BELIEVE IT.
THIS CONCEPT IS ONE THAT IS CLEARLY A WORK OF FICTION..
..THERE EXISTS A PARTICULAR SPIRIT .. A DIETY THAT CAN CONTROL THE FATE OF THE DICE AND WHICH PATRONS ARE THE UNLUCKY ONES.
..THAT, DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS ...
IT HAS BEEN SAID ...
AND YET ...

A REAL MONSTER HAS CONGRE-GATED HERE!
WHAT HAS JUST HAPPENED IS NO MERE STORY...
...
ざわ・・・

THIS MAN, JUST LIKE THE SATORI OF LEGEND ...
TRULY, THIS IS AN HONEST-TO-GOODNESS MONSTER, AS IF LIFTED STRAIGHT OUT FROM A FAIRY TALE!

T/N. THE SATORI IS A MOUNTAIN-DWELLING MONSTER IN JAPANESE FOLKLORE CAPABLE OF READING MINDS

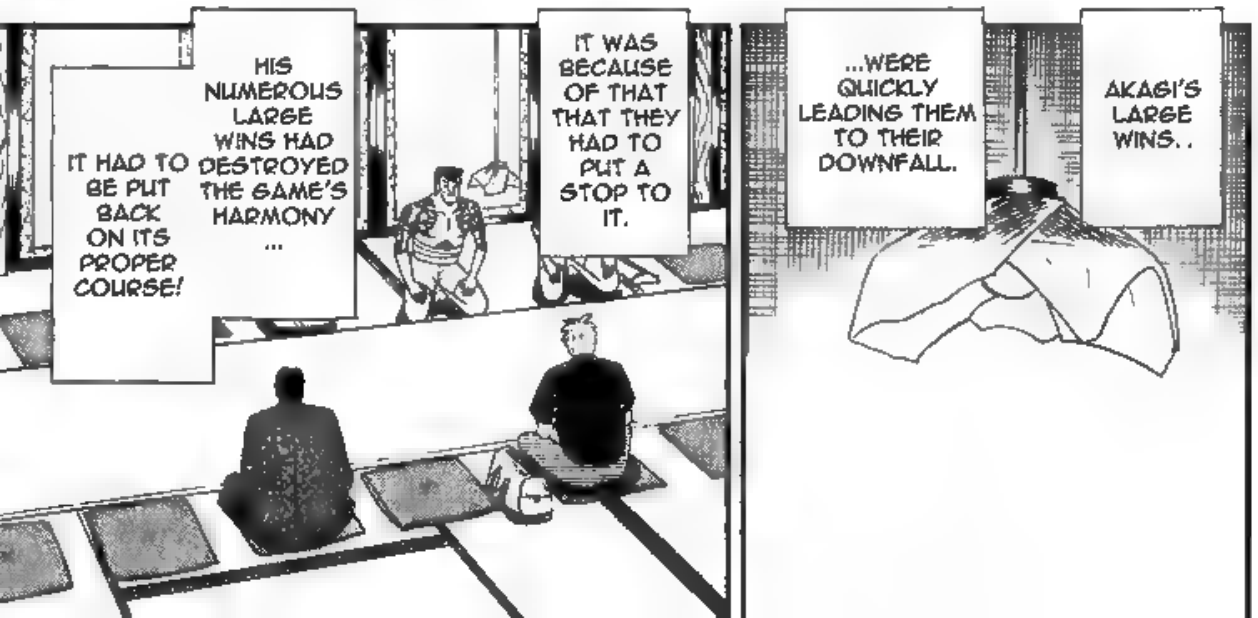

HIS EYES WOULD PEER INTO THEIR SOUL AND RIP OUT THE PROPER RESPONSE!
..AND DO SO EFFECTIVELY, NO MATTER HOW THEY TRIED TO RESIST HIM!
WOULD ALWAYS READ THEIR MINDS ...

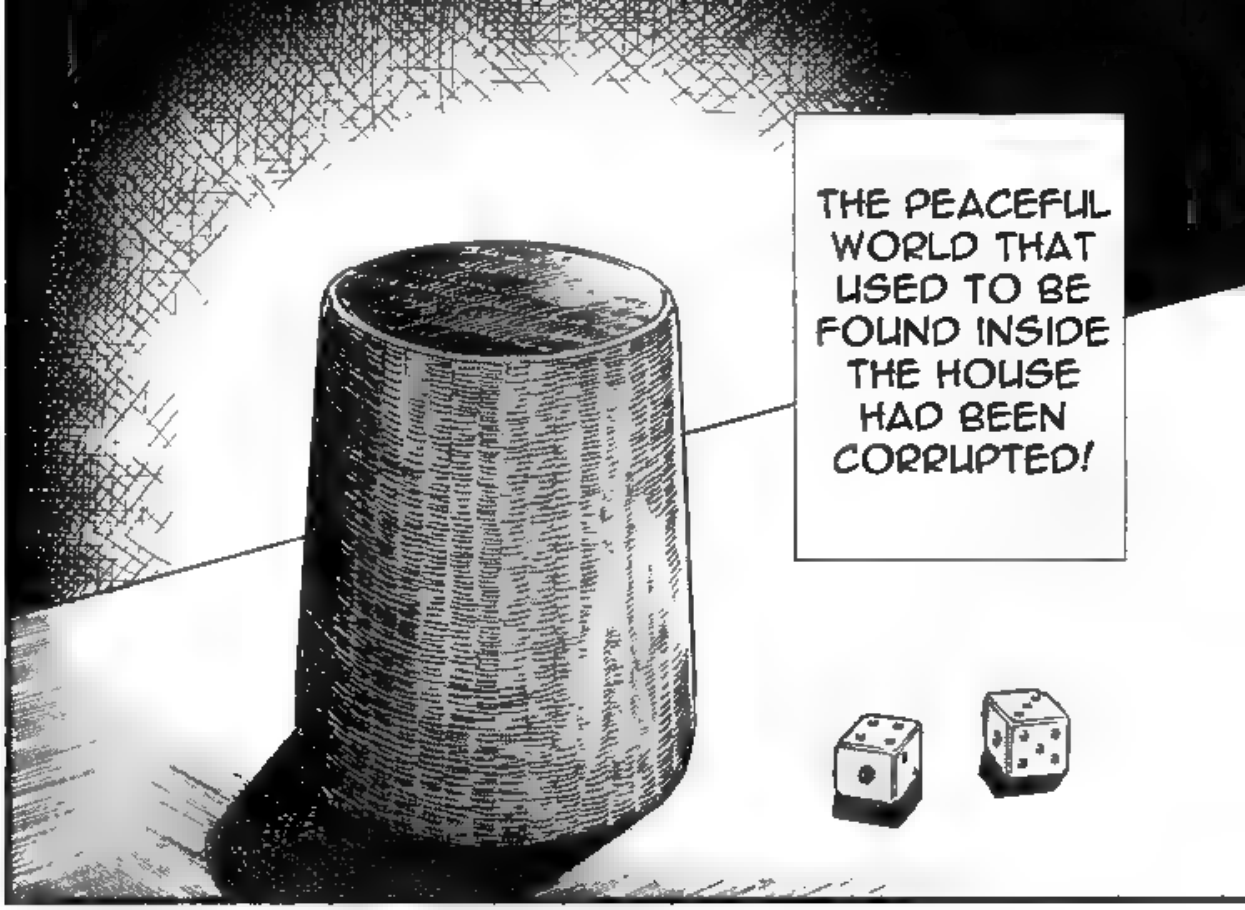

OF COURSE ...
AND THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THEY HAD EVER SEEN SOMETHING QUITE LIKE THIS!
THEY HAD BEEN RUNNING THIS GAME FOR 7 YEARS TO THIS POINT..
IT'S ABSURD, BUT THERE IS NOT MUCH THAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT ...

NO ...
RATHER ...
.....
.. THE EFFECT WAS THE SAME.
HERE, IN SUCH A TENSE ATMOSPHERE AS THIS...
AND TO FOLLOW ...
IT WAS AS IF HE HAD LOST THOSE SMALL SUMS ON PURPOSE!
NEEDLESS TO SAY, NOTHING COULD BE MORE IRRITATING TO THE ORGANIZERS.
LEADING THEM RIGHT TO WHAT HE CHOSE TO BET ON!
EVEN WITH THE OCCASIONAL MISS, HE WAS LEADING THEM ABOUT BY THE NOSE...
IT WAS AS IF THE ORGANIZERS' THOUGHTS WERE BEING MANIPULATED IN AND OF THEMSELVES!
BUT THE ONLY ONE GETTING ANYTHING AT THE MOMENT WAS AKAGI HIMSELF!
THEY COULD DO NOTHING BUT GIVE HIM WHAT HE WANTED...
BUT EVEN STILL, NOTHING COULD BE DONE ABOUT IT.
THEY FELT AS THOUGH THEY WERE BEING MOCKED

IT CONTINUED INFINITELY ...
THERE WAS NO END IN SIGHT ...
WITH NOTHING THEY COULD DO TO STOP IT!

IT WAS FOR THAT VERY REASON THAT THEY HAD TO DO SOMETHING
AND YET ...
. . .
IT WAS TRULY AN OVER-WHELMINGLY LOSING BATTLE.


IT HAD TO BE PUT BACK ON ITS PROPER COURSE!
HIS NUMEROUS LARGE WINS HAD DESTROYED THE GAME'S HARMONY ...
IT WAS BECAUSE OF THAT THAT THEY HAD TO PUT A STOP TO IT.
...WERE QUICKLY LEADING THEM TO THEIR DOWNFALL.
AKAGI'S LARGE WINS. .


THE PEACEFUL WORLD THAT USED TO BE FOUND INSIDE THE HOUSE HAD BEEN CORRUPTED!

SIR ...
AREN'T YOU GOING TO ROLL THE DICE?

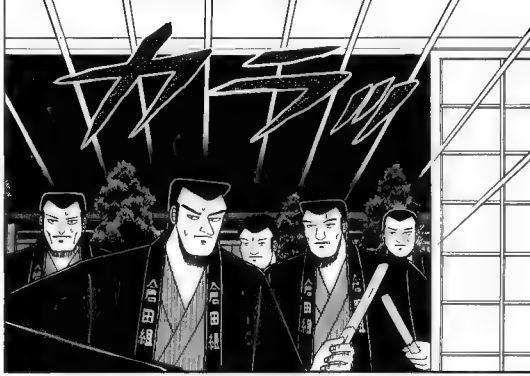
WHAT'S WRONG?

...

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

...

.....
AKAGI SHIGERU.
.....
IT'S REALLY TOO BAD FOR YOU ...
..BUT THIS IS THE END OF THE LINE.
AKAGI, HMM.. I WILL REMEMBER THAT NAME.
I'M AFRAID YOU'VE OVERSTAYED YOUR WELCOME!



THE KURATA GROUP RESORTED TO VIOLENCE
ONCE THE GUESTS ALONGSIDE AKAGI HAD DWINDLED DOWN...
...TO BUT A FEW OF THE MORE ELDERLY PATRONS...

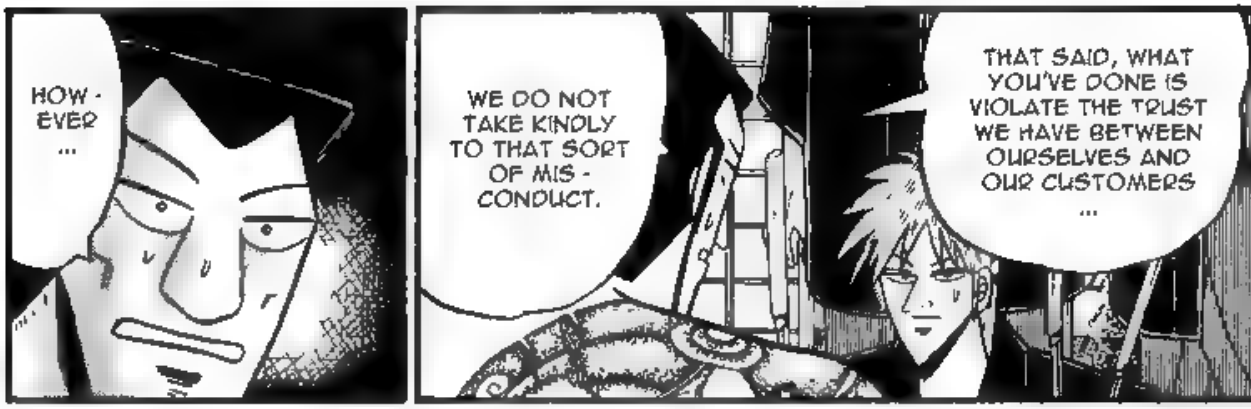
WAUGH!?
...THE KURATA GROUP REACHED THE END OF ITS ABILITY TO REMAIN PASSIVE
AT THE SAME TIME THE CLOCK STRUCK 11...

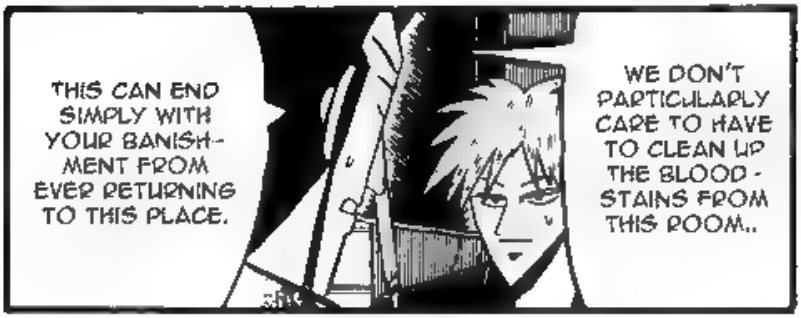
ONLY IF YOU DO THAT WILL WE PERMIT YOU TO LEAVE HERE WITH YOUR HEAD!
BEG FOR YOUR LIFE, YOU LOWLY WORM!
AT THAT TIME, THEY MADE THEIR MOVE!
KYAAAAAAAHHHHH!!!
AUUUUGGHHH....!!!
HAHH ..!!

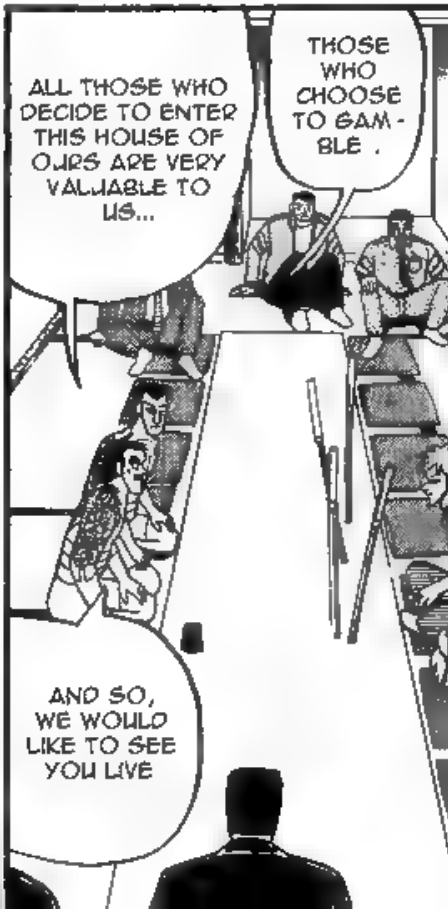
……

LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT A TOUGH GUY, HERE
FIGURES.
HMPH.
……
LET GO OF HIM.
WELL, THAT'S FINE
ざわ…
ざわ…
ざわ…
HMPH
……

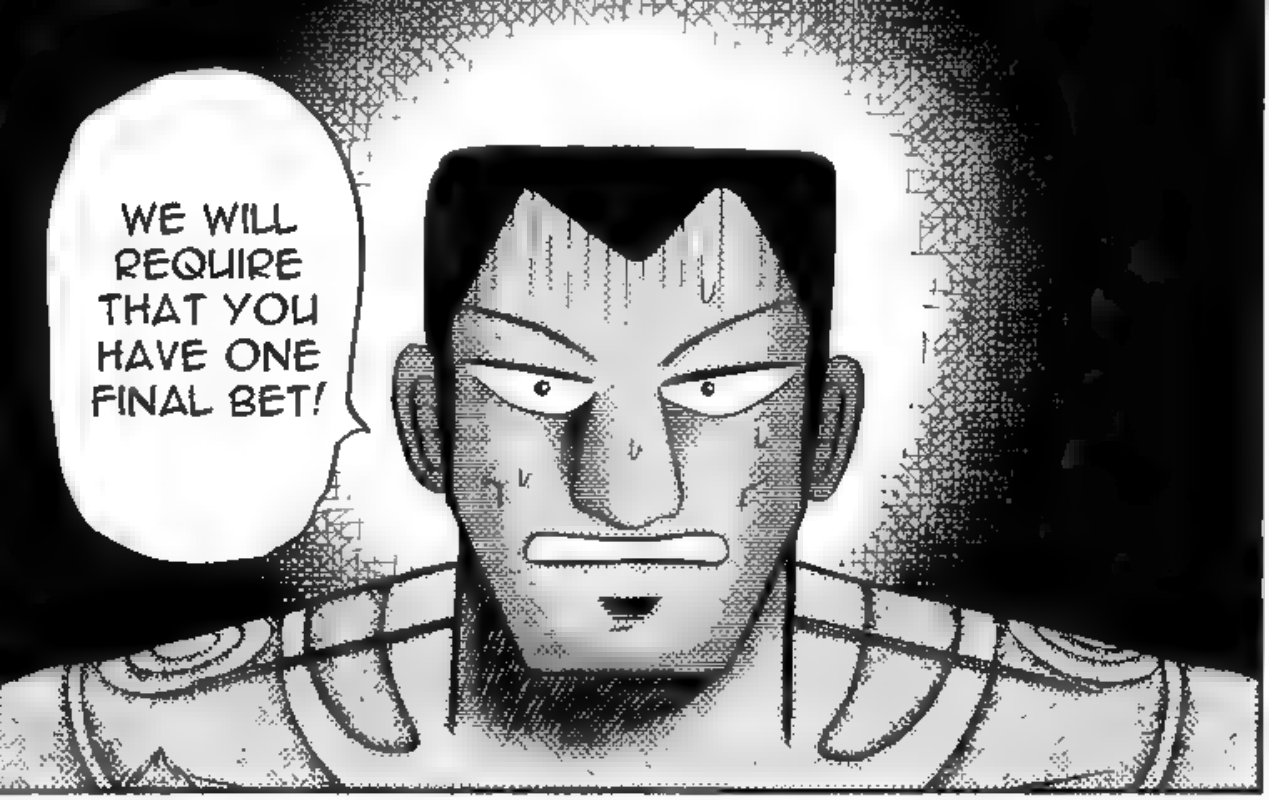
IF SOMEONE GIVES US REASON TO, WE'LL USE THOSE SWORDS. STAB THEM RIGHT THROUGH
YOU ARE NO EXCEP- TION
WE DON'T LIKE TO DO THIS, BUT..
AKAGI, WAS IT?
NOW, THEN .

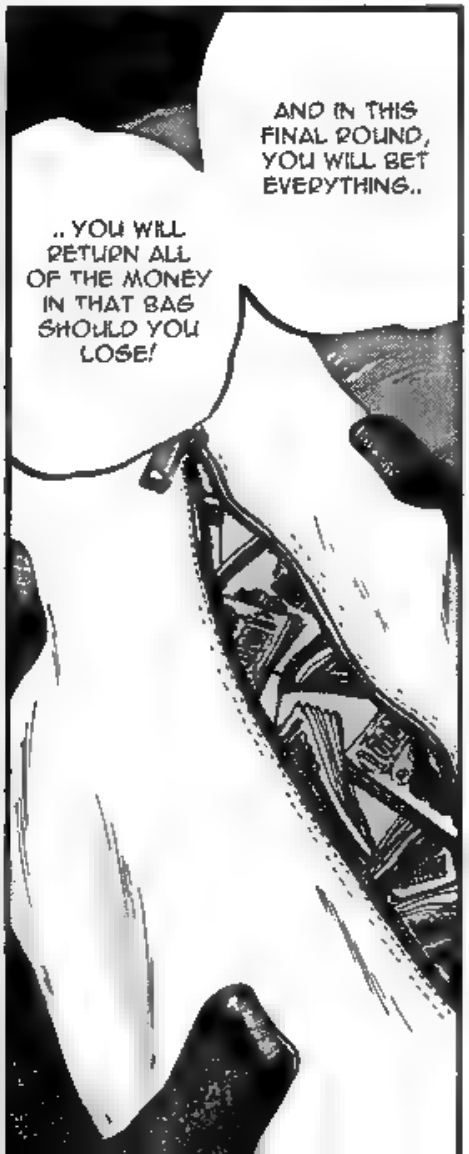

HOW - EVER ...
WE DO NOT TAKE KINDLY TO THAT SORT OF MIS - CONDUCT.
THAT SAID, WHAT YOU'VE DONE IS VIOLATE THE TRUST WE HAVE BETWEEN OURSELVES AND OUR CUSTOMERS ...


THIS CAN END SIMPLY WITH YOUR BANISH- MENT FROM EVER RETURNING TO THIS PLACE.
WE DON'T PARTICULARLY CARE TO HAVE TO CLEAN UP THE BLOOD - STAINS FROM THIS ROOM..

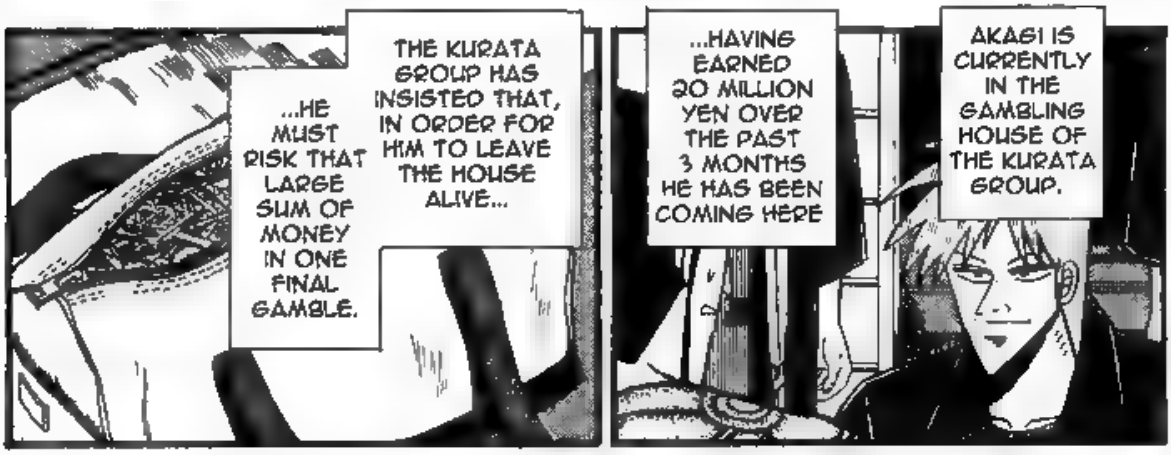

ALL THOSE WHO DECIDE TO ENTER THIS HOUSE OF OURS ARE VERY VALUABLE TO US...
THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO GAM - BLE .
AND SO, WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU LIVE

HOW - EVER ...
WE ALSO WON'T REQUIRE THAT YOU GIVE US BACK ANY MONEY THAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR BAG

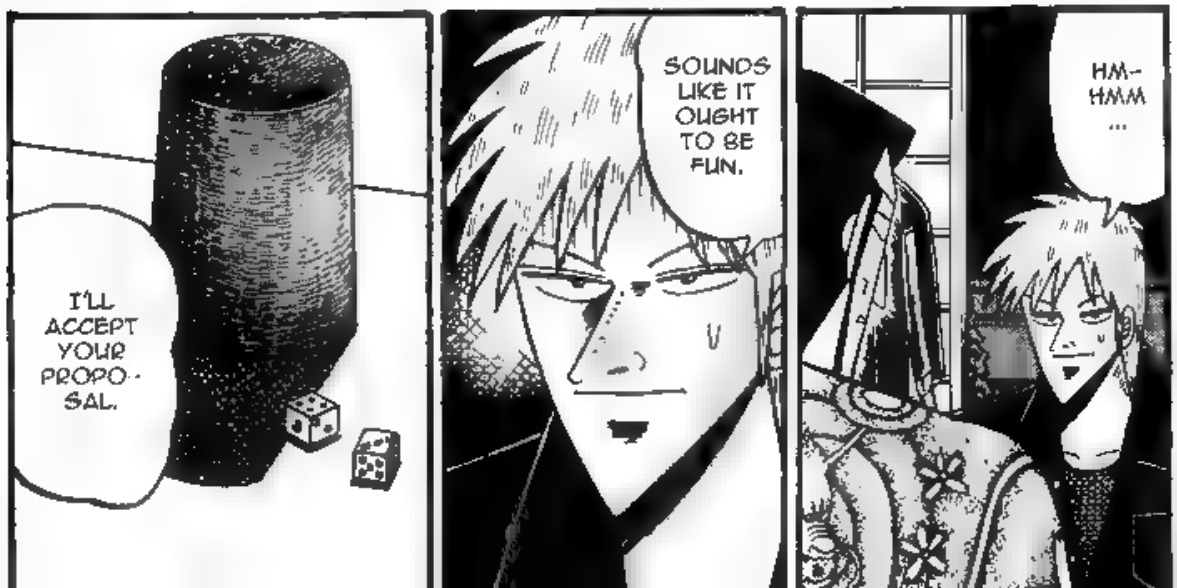

WE WILL REQUIRE THAT YOU HAVE ONE FINAL BET!


AND IN THIS FINAL ROUND, YOU WILL BET EVERYTHING..
.. YOU WILL RETURN ALL OF THE MONEY IN THAT BAG SHOULD YOU LOSE!

ざわ…ざわ…

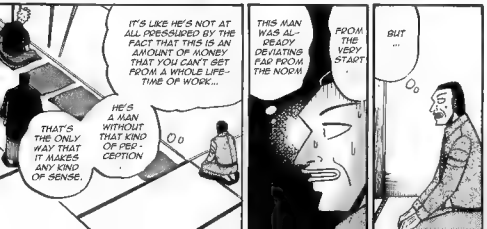

AKAGI IS CURRENTLY IN THE GAMBLING HOUSE OF THE KURATA GROUP.
...HAVING EARNED 20 MILLION YEN OVER THE PAST 3 MONTHS HE HAS BEEN COMING HERE
THE KURATA GROUP HAS INSISTED THAT, IN ORDER FOR HIM TO LEAVE THE HOUSE ALIVE...
...HE MUST RISK THAT LARGE SUM OF MONEY IN ONE FINAL GAMBLE.

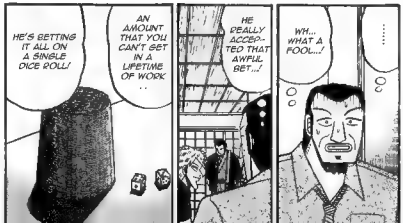
THIS IS MEANT TO INTI-MIDATE HIM, BUT...
HMM-HM-HM ...


HM-HMM ...
SOUNDS LIKE IT OUGHT TO BE FUN.
I'LL ACCEPT YOUR PROPO-SAL.

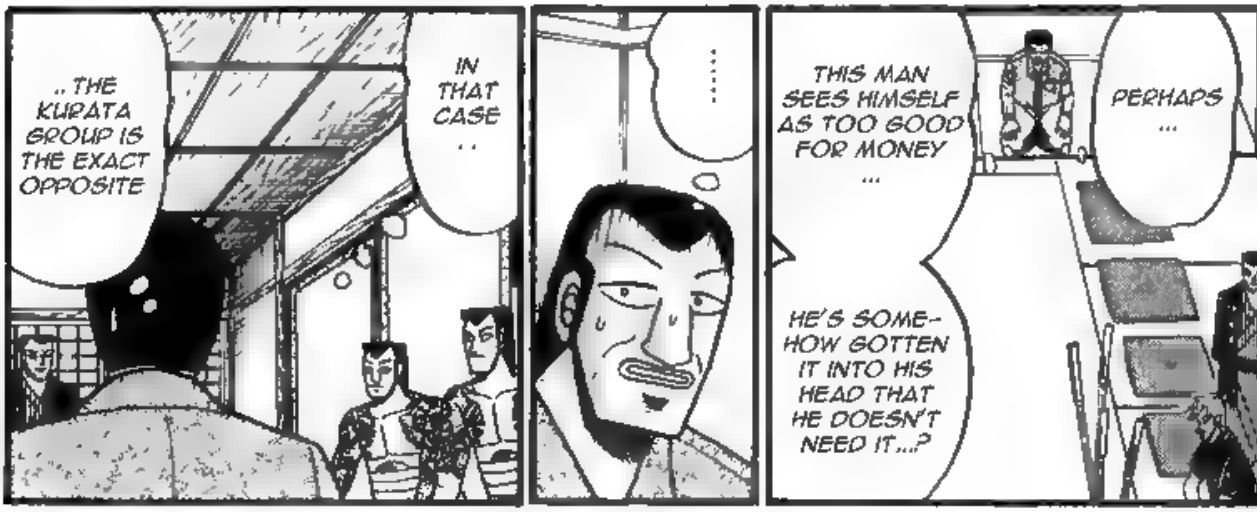
AKAGI READILY ACCEPTS IT...!

ABSOLUTELY INSANE ...
IT'S UNTHINKABLY RECKLESS ...!!
THIS 20 MILLION YEN IN SHOWA 40 (1965) WOULD EQUATE TO ABOUT 200 MILLION IN MODERN TIMES.
HE'S BETTING THE WHOLE 20 MILLION YEN!!


THAT'S THE ONLY WAY THAT IT MAKES ANY KIND OF SENSE.
HE'S A MAN WITHOUT THAT KIND OF PERCEPTION.
IT'S LIKE HE'S NOT AT ALL PRESSURED BY THE FACT THAT THIS IS AN AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT YOU CAN'T GET FROM A WHOLE LIFETIME OF WORK...
THIS MAN WAS ALREADY DEVIATING FAR FROM THE NORM.
FROM THE VERY START.
BUT ...

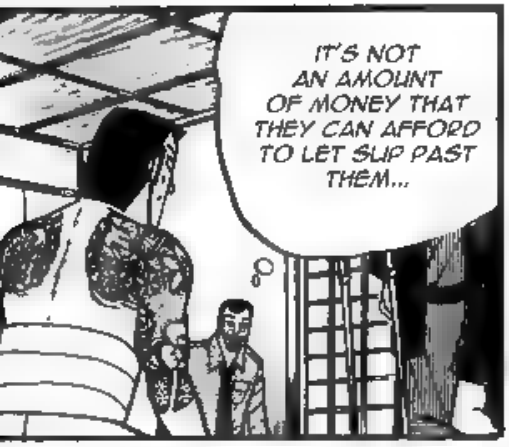

HE'S BETTING IT ALL ON A SINGLE DICE ROLL!
AN AMOUNT THAT YOU CAN'T GET IN A LIFETIME OF WORK ...
HE REALLY ACCEPTED THAT AWFUL BET...!
WH... WHAT A FOOL...!

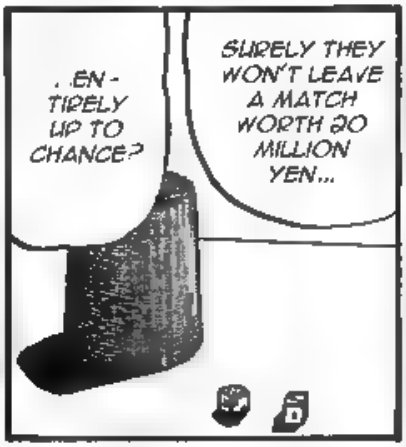
HIM HAVING THIS KIND OF REACTION TO SUCH A GIGANTIC GAMBLE ...
...I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND IT
IF IT WERE ME, I WOULD BE TREMBLING AT THE VERY THOUGHT .
HIS EXPRESSION HASN'T EVEN CHANGED ...


.. THE KURATA GROUP IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE
IN THAT CASE ..
.....
THIS MAN SEES HIMSELF AS TOO GOOD FOR MONEY ...
HE'S SOMEHOW GOTTEN IT INTO HIS HEAD THAT HE DOESN'T NEED IT...?
PERHAPS ...

THAT IS TO SAY, THIS SINGLE CHO-HAN MATCH WORTH 20 MILLION YEN ..
...IS ABOUT GETTING THEMSELVES BACK ON TRACK!
..BEFORE THEY WILL CONSIDER LETTING THIS AKAGI GUY LEAVE...
..THEY NEED TO GET THEIR MONEY BACK FROM HIM!
AND SINCE THEY HAVE THAT STANCE ..
NATURALLY, THEY'RE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE MONEY THAT THEY HAVE TO GAIN, HERE.

.....


IT'S NOT AN AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT THEY CAN AFFORD TO LET SLIP PAST THEM...


. EN- TIRELY UP TO CHANCE?
SURELY THEY WON'T LEAVE A MATCH WORTH 20 MILLION YEN...

SO, WHAT KIND OF POLICIES WILL THEY ADD...?

IT'S QUITE ADMIRABLE
I'M GLAD THAT YOU AGREED ...

VERY WELL, AKAGI, RIGHT?
THEY MUST THINK THEY HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF WINNING . DO THEY HAVE SOMETHING UP THEIR SLEEVES TO GIVE THEM THE EDGE?

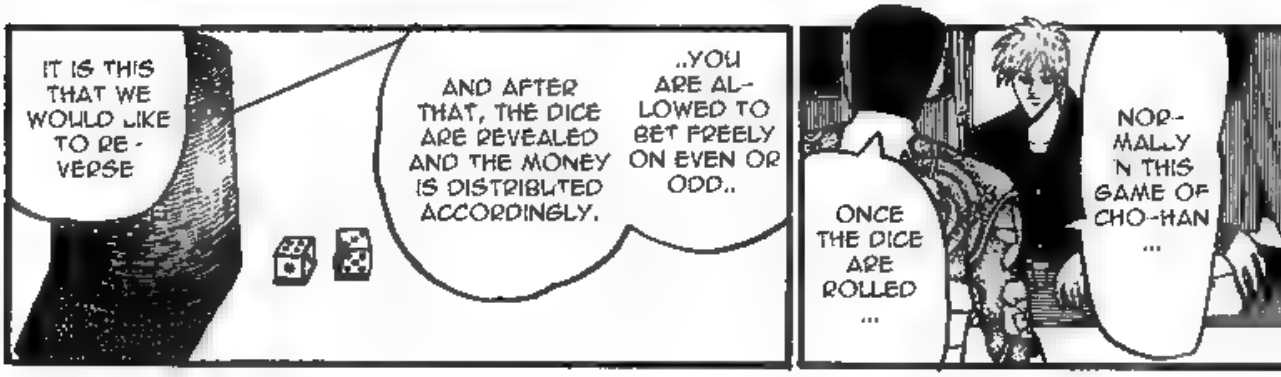
...WAS OUR TOP PRIORITY WITH THAT PROPOSAL.
SIMPLY GETTING YOU TO TAKE THE GAMBLE ...

I SUPPOSE WE COULD HAVE SETTLED FOR IT IF YOU'D DEMANDED TO RISK LESS THAN ALL OF YOUR MONEY.
HAH- HAH .. NEVER- THELESS ...

BUT IF YOU HADN'T AGREED, WE WOULD NOT HAVE ALLOWED YOU TO LEAVE
I SUPPOSE IT'S A BIT TRIVIAL AT THIS POINT ...

HAH-HAH ...
A PRO-POSAL ...?
BEFORE WE BEGIN, I HAVE A SINGLE PROPOSAL TO MAKE
NOW, THEN ...
.....

IT'S A SIMPLE MATTER.
WHAT'S THAT LOOK FOR?
WE DON'T WANT TO HAVE ANY KIND OF UNCERTAINTY AS TO WHAT THE RESULTS ARE
CONSIDERING HOW THIS IS A SINGLE DICE ROLL WORTH SUCH A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY..


IT IS THIS THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO RE-VERSE
AND AFTER THAT, THE DICE ARE REVEALED AND THE MONEY IS DISTRIBUTED ACCORDINGLY.
..YOU ARE AL-LOWED TO BET FREELY ON EVEN OR ODD..
ONCE THE DICE ARE ROLLED ...
NOR-MALLY IN THIS GAME OF CHO-HAN ...

CONSIDERING HOW MUCH YOU'VE BEEN WIN-NING...
IT'S NOT REALLY ALL THAT LOGICAL, BUT..
:
. AND THEN I WILL ROLL THE DICE
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU WILL MAKE YOUR BET FIRST ...

IT JUST FEELS LIKE YOU HAVE SOME KIND OF TRICK ...
SOME WAY OF TRACKING HOW THE DICE MOVE.
THAT IS TO SAY ...
...WE THINK YOU MIGHT BE SOMEHOW TRACKING WHICH SIDE OF THE DICE WILL LAND UP, THOUGH WE DON'T KNOW HOW.
WE DON'T HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT'S WHAT'S HAPPENING ...
BUT IT'S BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY
HMM-HM ...
I SEE .
YOUR SUSPICION IS A BIT OFF THE MARK, BUT ...
TO PUT YOUR MIND AT EASE, I SUPPOSE I CAN ALLOW THAT.
.....
SO, THEN, LET'S TRY THIS.
チャラ...
I'VE GOT A BIT OF POCKET CHANGE, HERE..
I'LL USE THESE 10-YEN AND 5-YEN COINS TO PICK BETWEEN EVEN AND ODD BEFORE YOU ROLL.
? .....

CAN I GET A PENCIL AND SOME PAPER?
THAT'S RIGHT
10-YEN AND 5-YEN ...?
THAT WILL MEAN EVEN
IF I HAVE THE 10-YEN COIN IN MY HAND AFTER THE DICE ARE ROLLED,
. AND THEN, HOLD IT OUT LIKE SO
..CHOOSE ONE OF THE COINS TO HOLD ON TO .
IN SHORT, I'LL SLIP MY HAND INTO MY POCKET.
SO, THEN, SINCE WE HAVE THIS,
THERE WILL BE NO QUES-TION AS TO THE OUT-COME.
Hm Hm..
¥10 -> Even
¥5 -> Odd
AND IF IT'S THE 5-YEN COIN, IT WILL BE ODD.
SORRY YOU DON'T GET TO TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF A LOSS
HM-HMM ...
THIS IS JUST TO MAKE SURE WE DON'T FORGET WHICH IS WHICH.

THAT SHOULD BE FINE
¥10 -> Even
¥5 -> Odd
ズッ..
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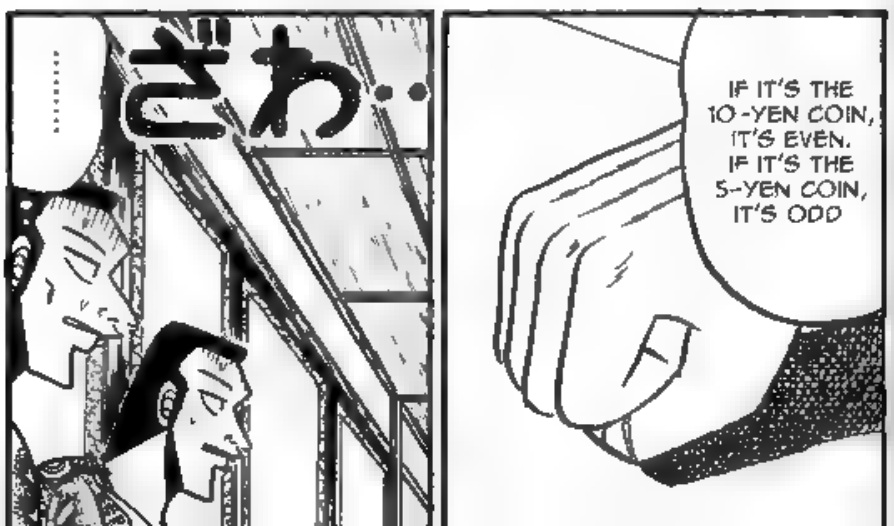
ドドド
ズッ
ズラ

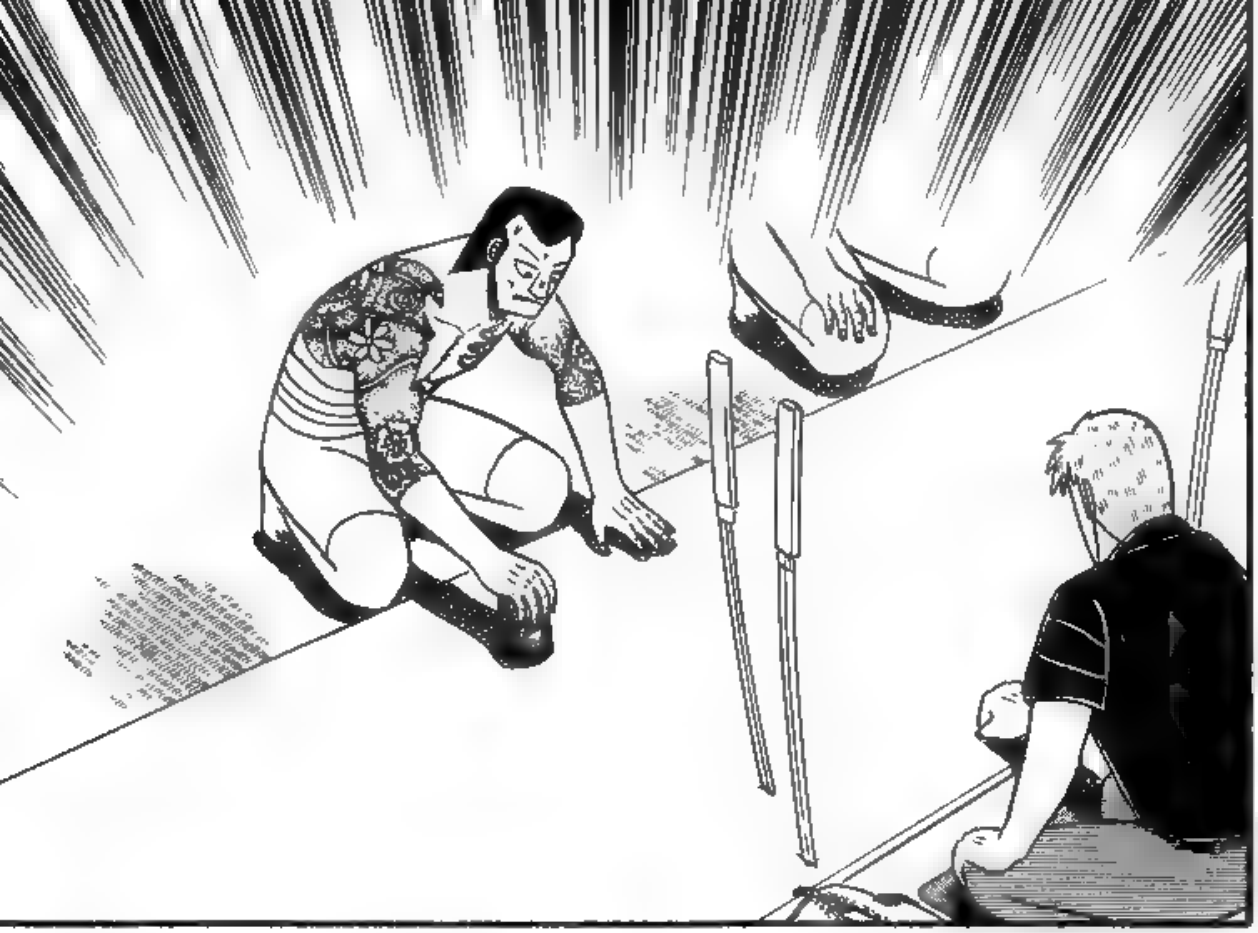
I'M HOLDING ONE OF THE TWO COINS IN MY HAND RIGHT NOW.
.....

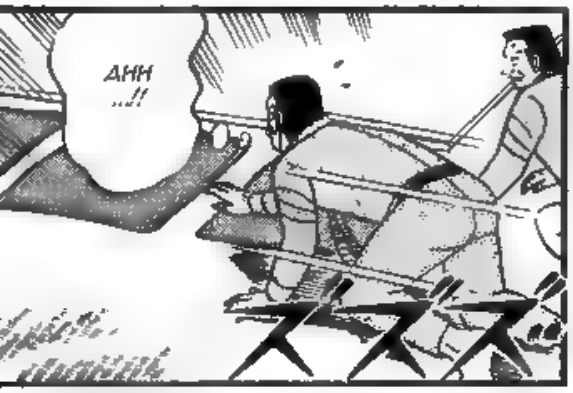
I'VE DECIDED!


IF IT'S THE 10-YEN COIN, IT'S EVEN. IF IT'S THE 5-YEN COIN, IT'S ODD
ざわ..
.....

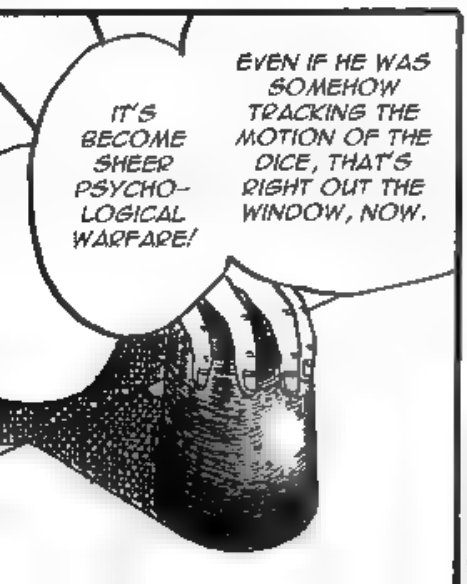
NO PROB-LEM
ざわ‥ざわ‥
DAIGASHI
KURAISHI
……
YES, SIR!
……
DO IT!
……
ooo
AND NOW FOR THE ROLL!

URGH ...!!

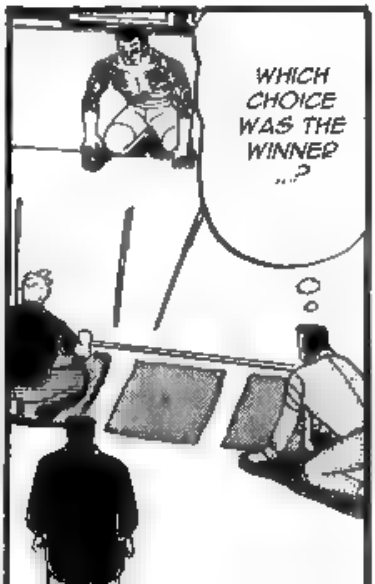



AHH ..!!

ざわ‥
……

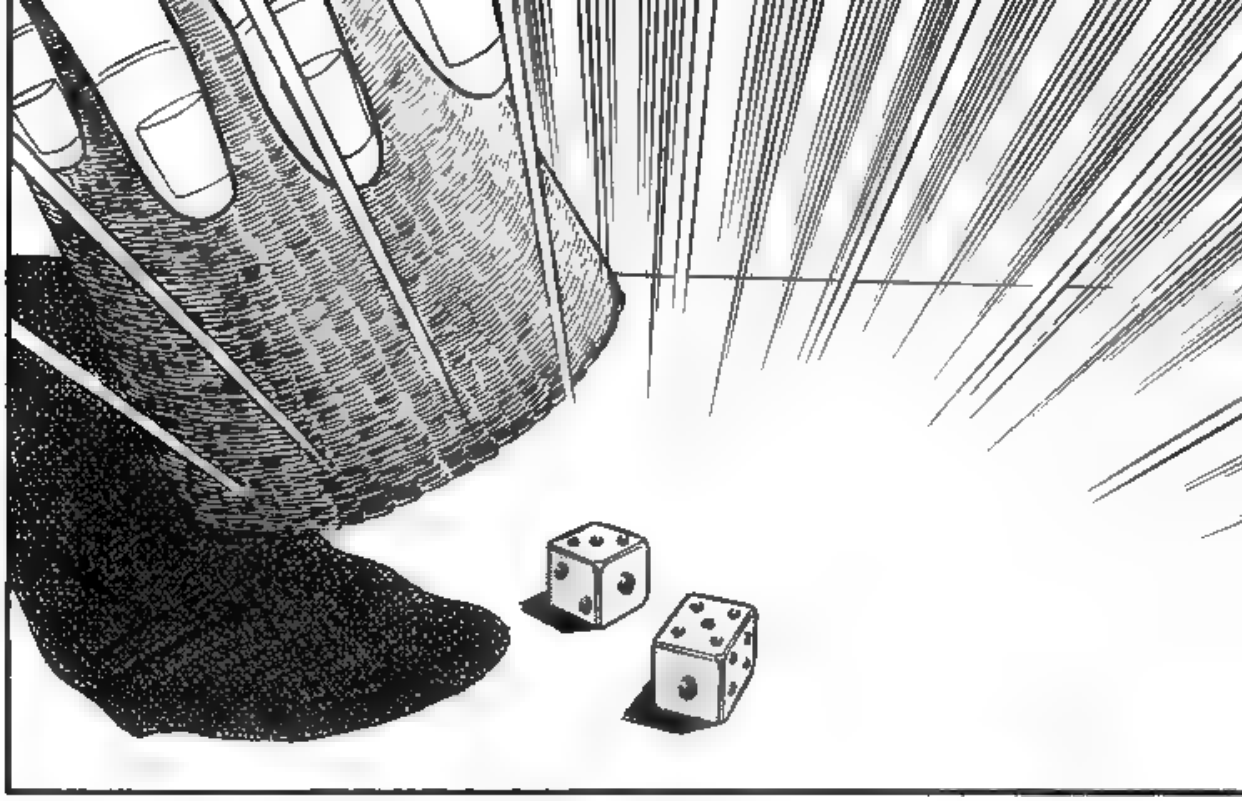

IT'S BECOME SHEER PSYCHO-LOGICAL WARFARE!
EVEN IF HE WAS SOMEHOW TRACKING THE MOTION OF THE DICE, THAT'S RIGHT OUT THE WINDOW, NOW.

SO IT'S FOR SURE.
THIS GUY MADE HIS DECISION BETWEEN EVEN AND ODD BEFORE THE ROLL TOOK PLACE..

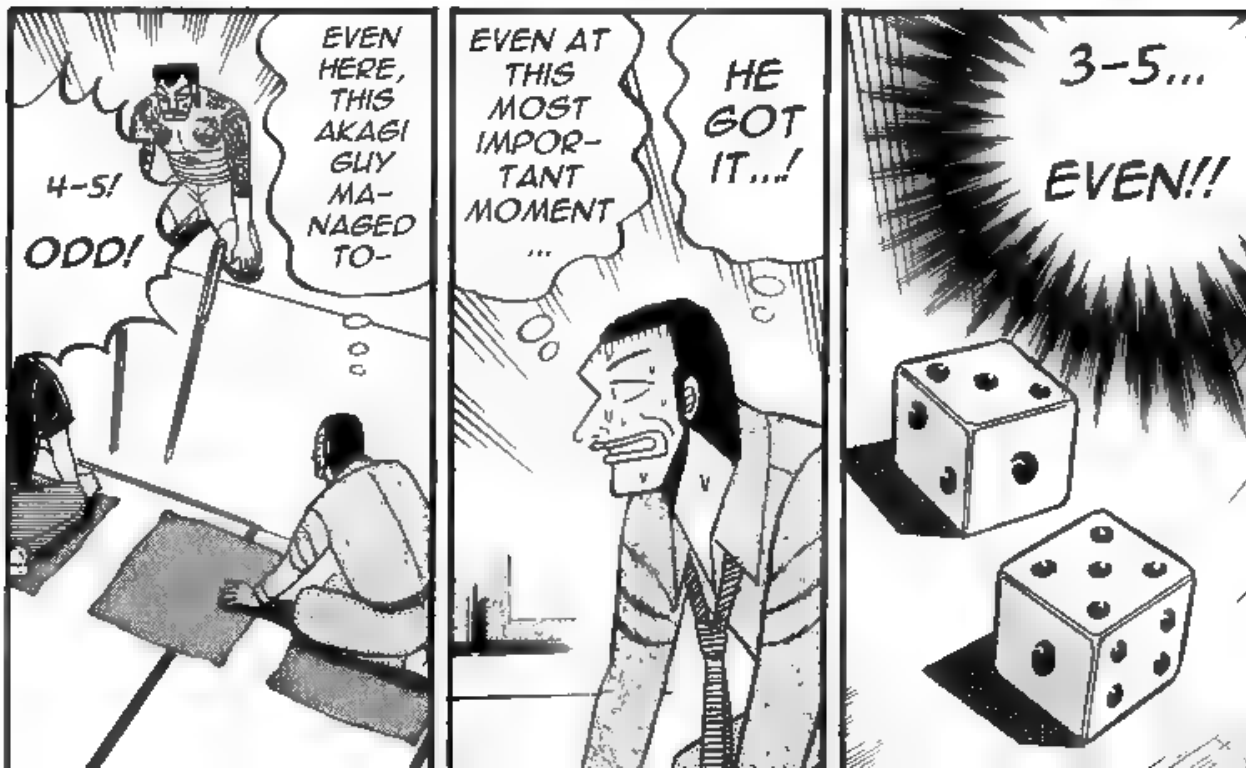

WHICH CHOICE WAS THE WINNER ..?

OR WASN'T HE...?
WAS HE ABLE TO READ HIM ...?
WAS HE ABLE TO SEE THROUGH THE KURATA GROUP'S DEALER FOR THIS GAME...?
WHAT DID HE CHOOSE ...?
HE MADE HIS BET BEFORE THE DICE WERE ROLLED..
WAS HIS BET ON EVEN OR ODD ...?
HM - HMM ...
!!
AH ...!!
....

10 YEN MEANS EVEN!
IT'S THE 10-YEN COIN...!
SO WHAT WAS THE ROLL ...?!
HEH-HEH ...

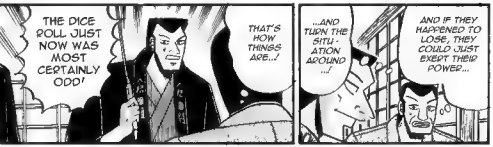


URGH...!!


4-5!
ODD!
EVEN HERE, THIS AKAGI GUY MA-NAGED TO-
EVEN AT THIS MOST IMPOR-TANT MOMENT ...
HE GOT IT...!
3-5...
EVEN!!

WHA ...?!
VALUED PATRONS!
B-BUT...!
Y... YOU'RE KIDDING ...!!
WHAA ...!!
WHAT IS ALL THIS COMMOTION ABOUT?
WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM?

URGH ...!!
AHH ...!!
DO YOU SEE ANYTHING WRONG, HERE?


THE DICE ROLL JUST NOW WAS MOST CERTAINLY ODD!
THAT'S HOW THINGS ARE..!
...AND TURN THE SITU- ATION AROUND ...!
AND IF THEY HAPPENED TO LOSE, THEY COULD JUST EXERT THEIR POWER...

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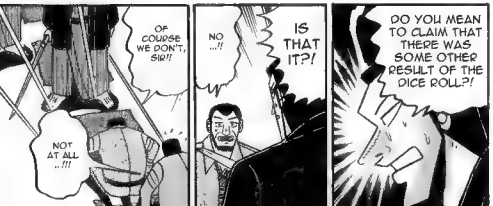
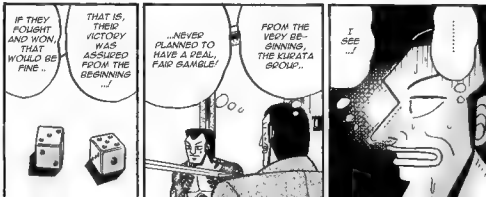
ざわ…


OF COURSE WE DON'T, SIR!!
NO ...!!
IS THAT IT?!
DO YOU MEAN TO CLAIM THAT THERE WAS SOME OTHER RESULT OF THE DICE ROLL?!
NOT AT ALL ...!!!

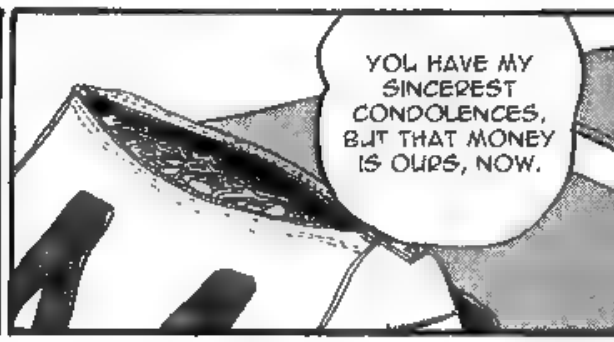

IF THEY FOUGHT AND WON, THAT WOULD BE FINE ..
THAT IS, THEIR VICTORY WAS ASSURED FROM THE BEGINNING ...!
...NEVER PLANNED TO HAVE A REAL, FAIR GAMBLE!
FROM THE VERY BE- GINNING, THE KURATA GROUP..
I SEE ...!

HEH-
HEH
..

OOO
. .!!!
IT'S
DEFINITELY
OOO,
SIR!

AKAGI,
OR
WHAT-
EVER
YOUR
NAME
WAS
SO, THERE
YOU HAVE
IT!

HEY,
YOU!


YOU HAVE MY
SINCEREST
CONDOLENCES,
BUT THAT MONEY
IS OURS, NOW.

HUH
..?

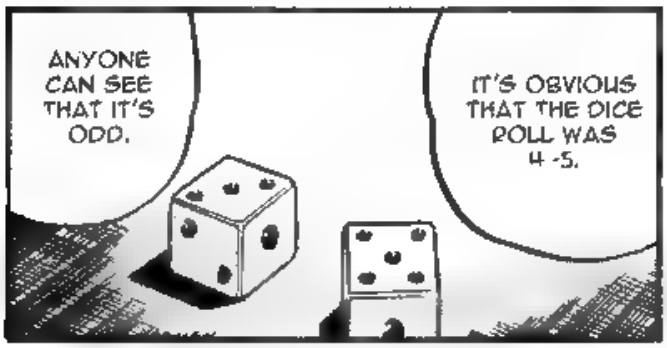
SIR!

CUT THE BULL CRAP!
IT'S EVEN!
HAH-HAH-HAH!
HUH?!
WHA..?
NO.. MORE THAN THAT!
ABOUT IT BEING EVEN OR ANYTHING ELSE
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU CHOOSE TO BLURT OUT...
YOU'RE ACTING SO VERY STRANGE!
AGAIN WITH THAT?

HEY, HEY!
IF NOT, HE WOULDN'T HAVE SAID SUCH NONSENSE LIKE THE ROLL BEING EVEN!
HE MUST HAVE HEARD US WRONG!

PLEASE EXCUSE ME, MR KURAISHI ..
TALKING ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE S JUST PLAIN STRANGE!
THE ONLY THING WE NEEDED TO KNOW WAS THE DICE ROLL...

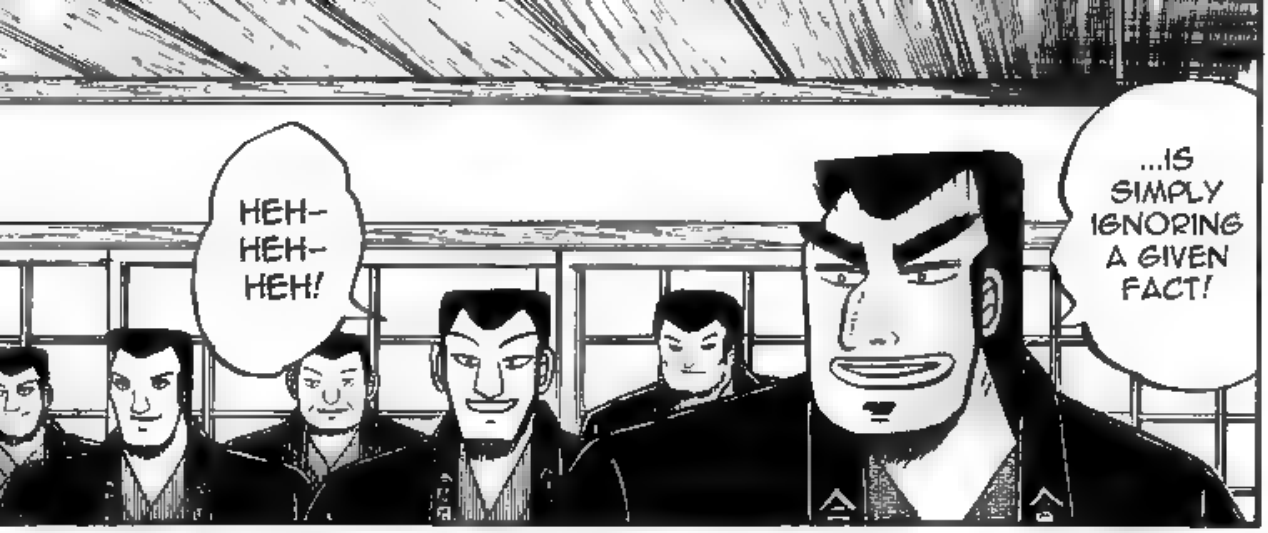
WE DON'T NEED TO TELL HIM, IT'S JUST THE WAY THINGS ARE!
WHAT ODD THINGS YOU'RE SAYING!


ANYONE CAN SEE THAT IT'S ODD.
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THE DICE ROLL WAS 4 -5.

JUST NOW,
AT ANY RATE, WHATEVER HE'S GRUMBLING ABOUT RIGHT NOW IS PURE NONSENSE.

THEN AKAGI OR WHO - EVER HE IS...
IF THAT'S HOW IT IS ...

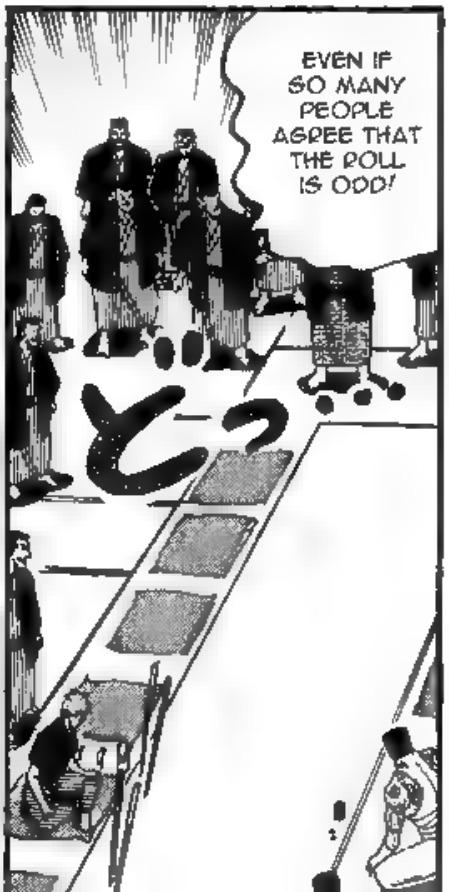
IS THAT SO?
WE'VE CONFIRMED THAT IN NUMEROUS WAYS, AS IT IS!
ALL THE OTHER PATRONS WHO WERE GATHERED HERE AGREE THAT THE ROLL WAS ODD!


HEH-
HEH-
HEH!
...IS SIMPLY IGNORING A GIVEN FACT!

IT'S ONLY NATURAL FOR PEOPLE TO TRY TO HOPELESSLY DEFEND THINGS THAT THEY'VE ALREADY LOST, AFTER ALL!

THAT'S RIGHT!
BUT YOU SIMPLY MUST COME TO TERMS WITH IT!
I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE UPSET AT HAVING LOST SO MUCH SO QUICKLY ...

クス‥
クス‥
HEH-
HEH.


EVEN IF SO MANY PEOPLE AGREE THAT THE POLL IS ODD!
どっ

EVERY SINGLE ONE
OF YOU DESPICABLE FUCKS

...YOU'RE ALL GOING STRAIGHT TO HELL!

第61話 心中

CHAPTER 61 - HEART

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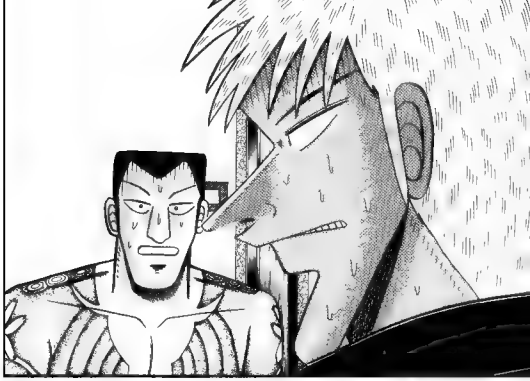


...YOU'RE A CHICKEN, AND WE'VE GOT YOUR TINY NECK FIRMLY PRESSED BETWEEN OUR FINGERS.

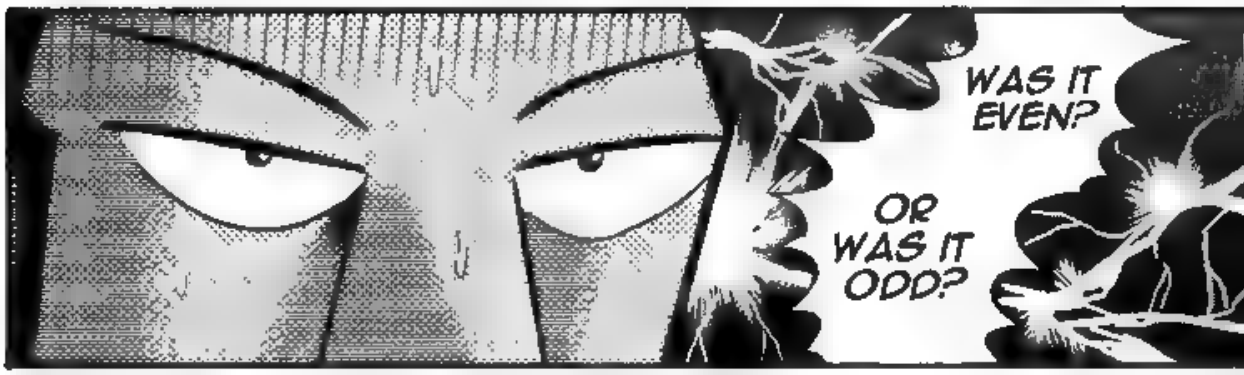
THAT IS TO SAY, IT'S AS IF...
RIGHT NOW, YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO SPEAK BACK TO US IN SUCH A MANNER

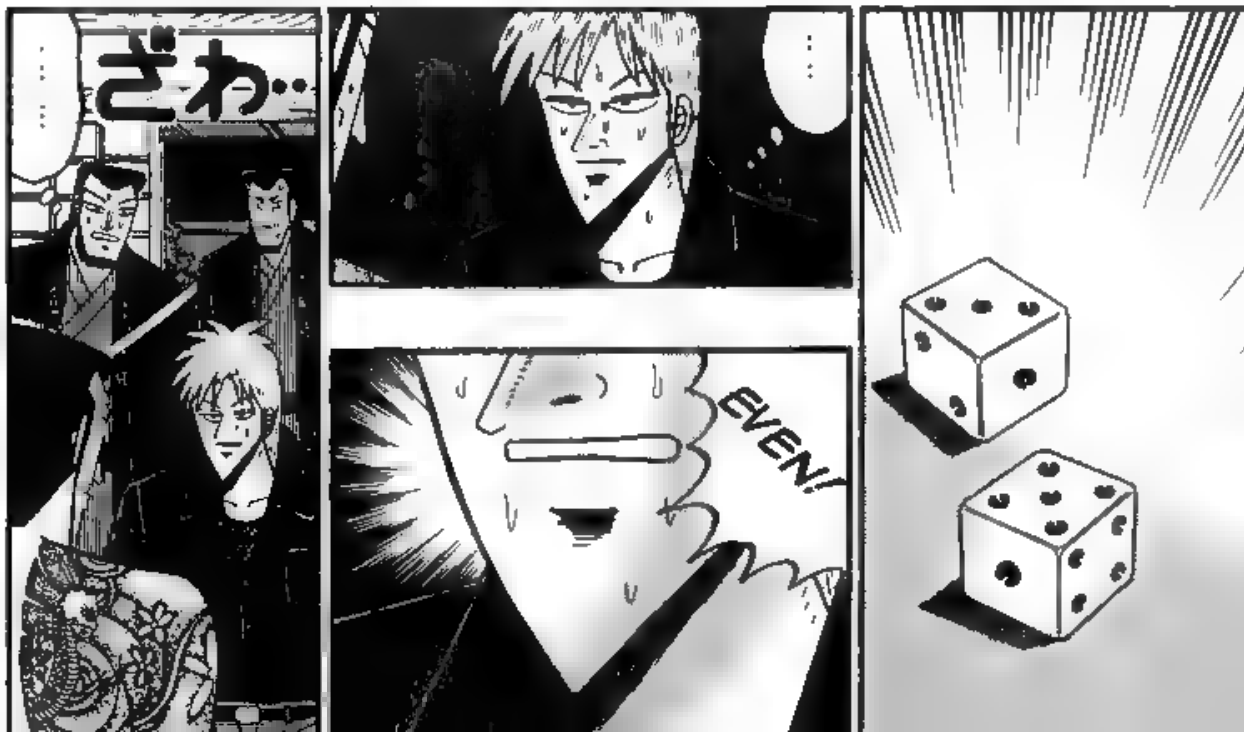
I WILL ASK YOU ONCE MORE
YOU NEED TO TRY AND APPEAL TO US WITH ALL OF YOUR STRENGTH.
IT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO JUST AGREE AND MOVE ON.
IF YOU DON'T WANT US TO SEPERATE YOUR HEAD FROM YOUR BODY..
...WE CAN DO SO JUST LIKE THAT.
IF WE DECIDE TO SNAP IT IN TWO..

HEH-HEH...

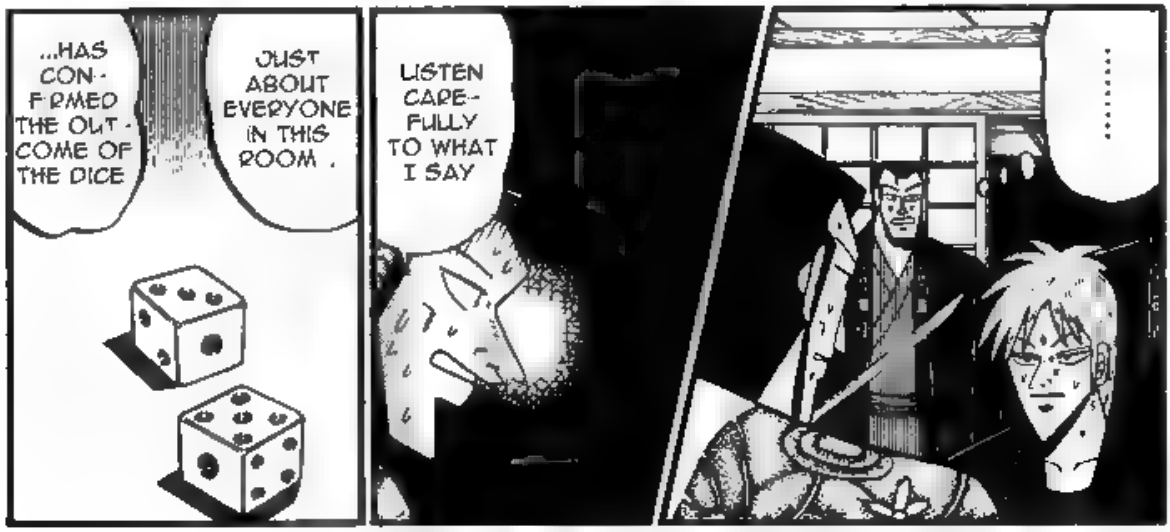
ざわ・・・
ざわ

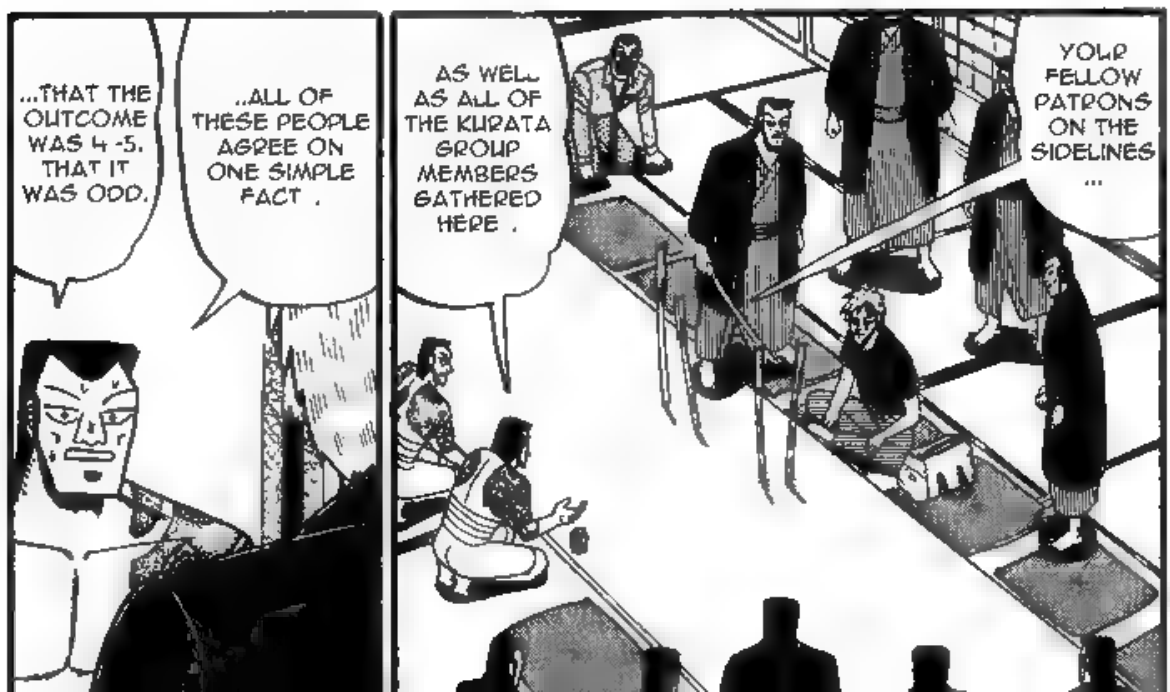
WE'VE GOT IT ALL UNDER CONTROL.
YOU REALLY DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?


WAS IT EVEN?
OR WAS IT ODD?


ざわ…
……
……
EVEN!

.....
HOLD ON!
TH..
THIS GUY ...!!

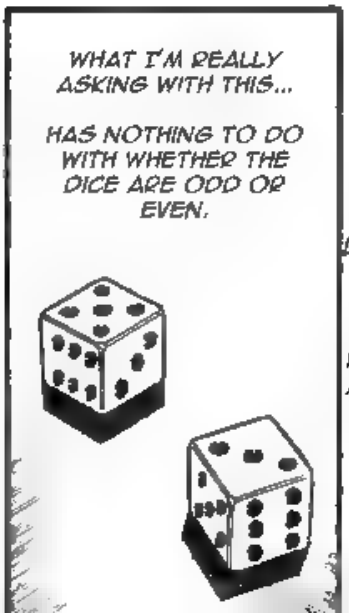

...HAS CON-FIRMED THE OUT-COME OF THE DICE
JUST ABOUT EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM.
LISTEN CARE-FULLY TO WHAT I SAY
.....


...THAT THE OUTCOME WAS 4-5. THAT IT WAS ODD.
..ALL OF THESE PEOPLE AGREE ON ONE SIMPLE FACT.
AS WELL AS ALL OF THE KURATA GROUP MEMBERS GATHERED HERE.
YOUR FELLOW PATRONS ON THE SIDELINES ...

ALL OF THIS CAN END, NICE AND QUIETLY.
IF YOU CAN SIMPLY AGREE WITHOUT RAISING A FUSS ABOUT IT...
THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS YET TO CONFIRM THIS FACT IS YOU.

DO THESE DICE SHOW ...
NOW, THINK ABOUT THIS VERY CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU GIVE YOUR FINAL ANSWER.
...IT WILL BE A DIRECT INSULT TO ALL OF YOUR SUPERIORS WHO YOU SEE SURROUNDING YOU.
IF YOU SAY THE WRONG THING, HOWEVER ...

WHAT I'M REALLY ASKING YOU ABOUT ...



DO YOU HAVE THE DESIRE TO CONTINUE LIVING?

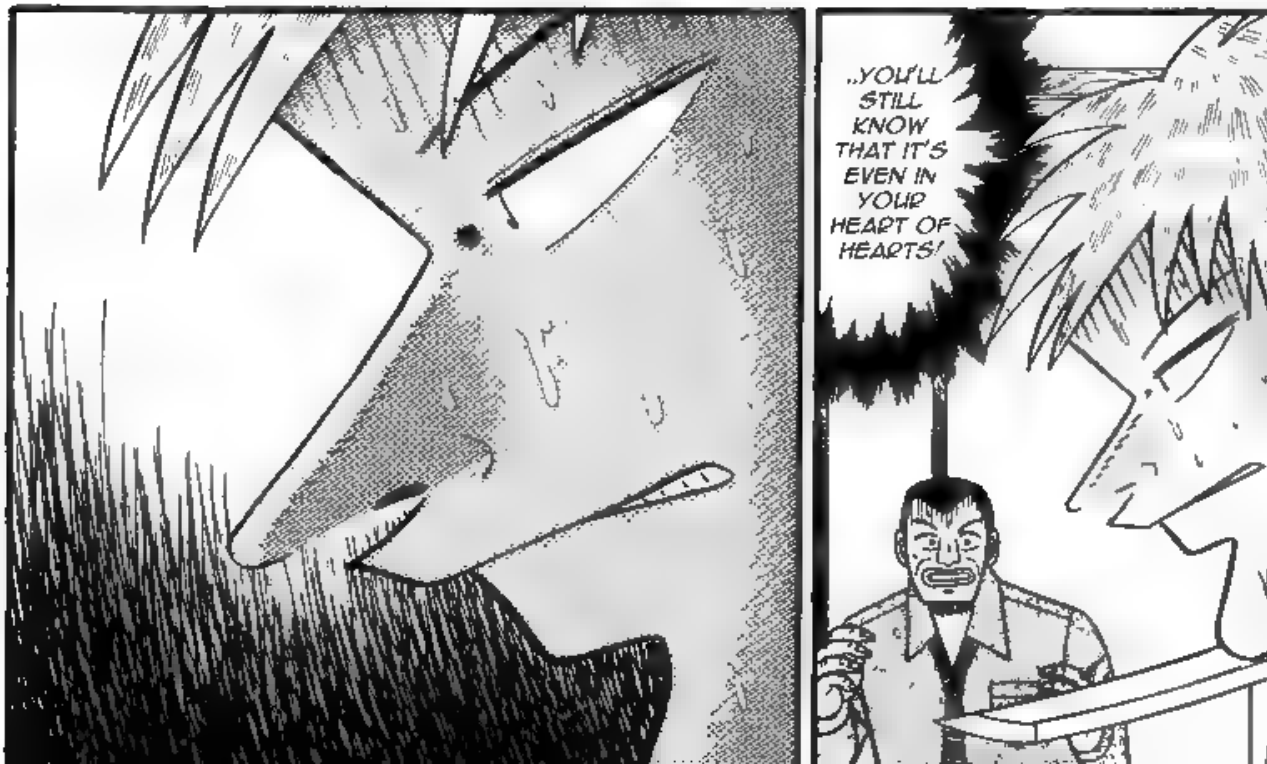
NO . EVEN THAT IS TOO SMALL OF A SCALE
.. WHO RULED OVER TH S ENTIRE COUN - TRY.
IF THERE WERE A MAN ...
.....
FROM EUROPE TO EURASIA, NORTH TO SOUTH ...
IF ALL OF THIS WORLD'S COUN - TRIES AND LAND MASSES WERE DICTATED BY ONE RULER..
...COULD HE MANAGE TO DISTORT THE TRUTH!
NOT EVEN IF THIS RULER WERE SOME KIND OF OTHERWORLDLY MONSTER. .
...AND HE CERTAINLY COULD NOT CHANGE THE OUTCOME OF A GAMBLE!
HE COULD NOT CHANGE EVENTS AROUND, HE COULD NOT ALTER MY UNTIMELY DEATH ...

IT'S EVEN!

HOW FAR DO YOU THINK YOU CAN PRESS YOUR LUCK?!
YOU LITTLE SHIT!!!
WAUGH!!

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MUCH MONEY IS ON THE LINE, HERE...
WH..
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS..?!
I CAN KILL YOU, YOU KNOW!
DON'T FUCK AROUND WITH US!!!
KYAAAAAUGH!!
YOU SHOULD JUST GO ALONG WITH THEM!
..IF THESE YAKUZA DON'T SEE YOUR PLIGHT, IT'S ALL OVER!!

IT'S NOT GIVING IN.
THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE TO DO TO STAY ALIVE!
OF COURSE IT'S REALLY EVEN, BUT JUST SAY THAT IT'S ODD!
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CHOICE..!


..YOU'LL STILL KNOW THAT IT'S EVEN IN YOUR HEART OF HEARTS!

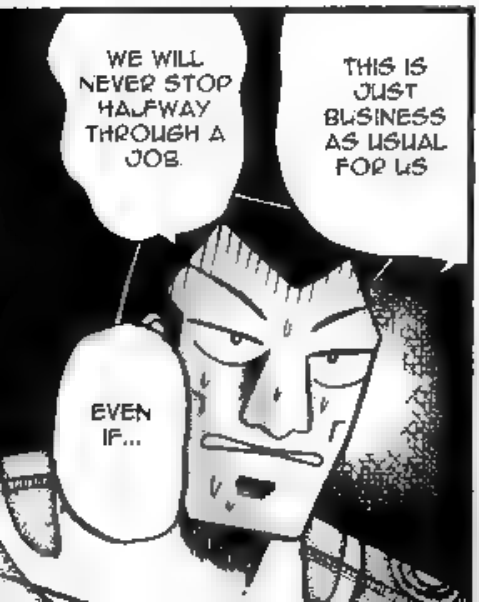
ガヨ…
ガヨ…

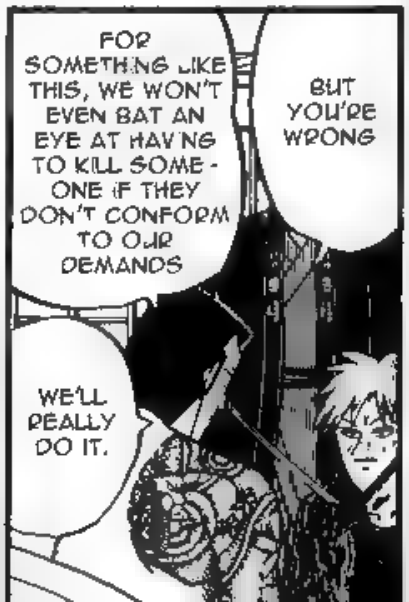
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO DIE NOW, KID?

……

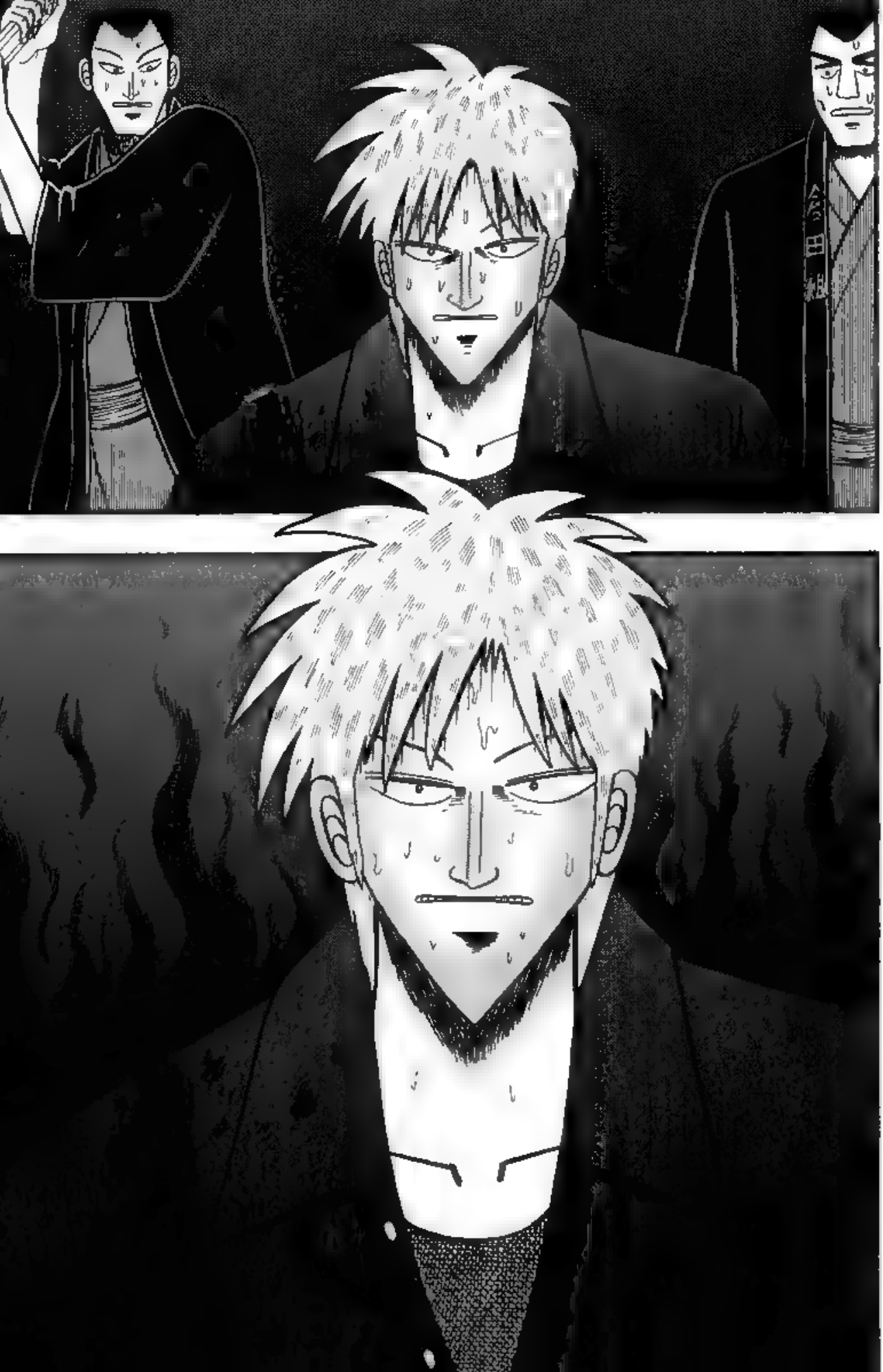
…THAT YOU'RE TAKING A CHANCE, AND THINKING THAT IF IT COMES RIGHT DOWN TO IT, WE WON'T ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO KILL YOU.
I'D WAGER A GUESS …

I DOUBT YOU'RE REALLY THINK NG RATION - ALLY RIGHT NOW
WELL, YOU'RE STILL YOUNG AND FULL OF STUPID IDEAS …


WE WILL NEVER STOP HALFWAY THROUGH A JOB.
THIS IS JUST BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR US
EVEN IF…


FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS, WE WON'T EVEN BAT AN EYE AT HAV NG TO KILL SOME - ONE IF THEY DON'T CONFORM TO OUR DEMANDS
BUT YOU'RE WRONG
WE'LL REALLY DO IT.

IF YOU ANSWER THIS QUESTION INCOR-RECTLY JUST ONE MORE TIME..
THIS IS ABSOLUTELY YOUR LAST CHANCE.
I WILL ASK YOU ONE MORE TIME!
...EVEN IF WE HAVE TO KILL SOMEONE!
...WE WILL SWEEP YOUR HEAD CLEAN OFF YOUR SHOULDERS!
ANSWER ME THIS, AKAGI!
eek...!!
TAKE A LOOK AT THESE DICE!
ARE THEY EVEN...
OR ODD?!



EVEN!!

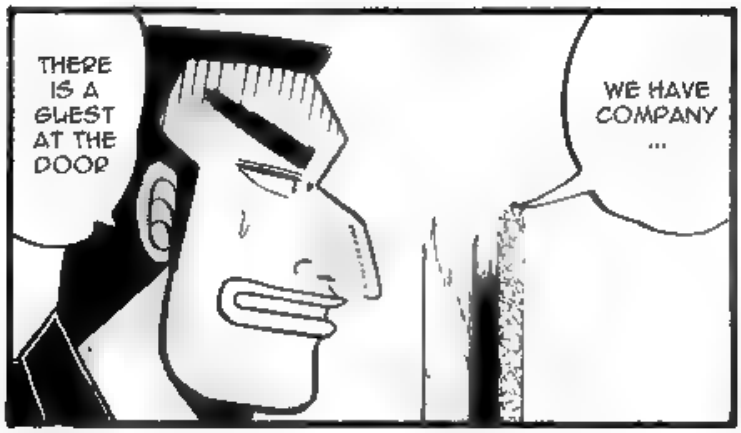
VERY WELL.

.....

KH...!!

THEN
DIE!!

WAIT!
AAAUU UGH !!
HAAAA AAAAAA AAAAH HHH!!!


THERE IS A GUEST AT THE DOOR
WE HAVE COMPANY ...

CAN'T YOU HEAR?
?

YEAH ...
.....
GO TO THEM

KH ...
Can anybody hear me? *knock* Hello?

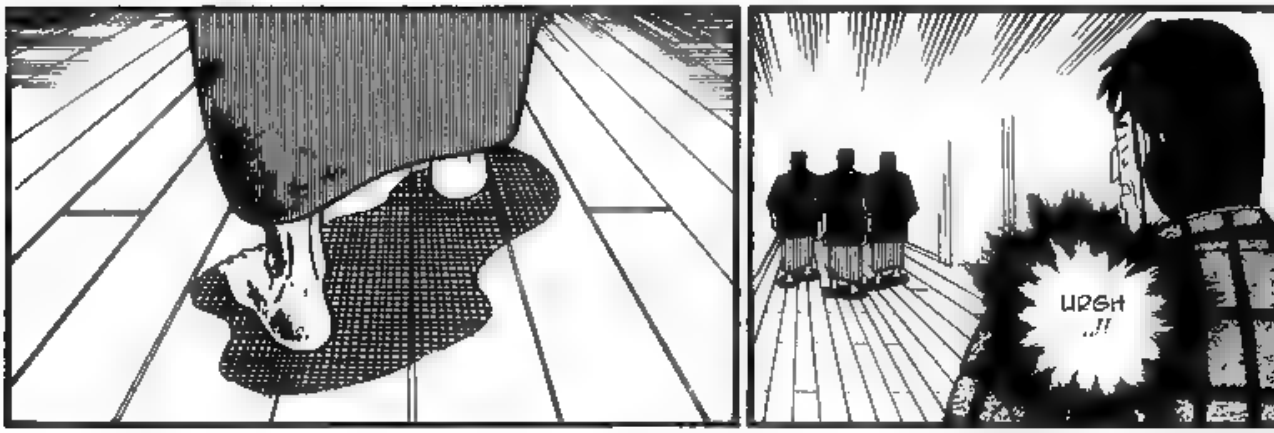
knock *knock* Is anybody there..?

……
倉田組
ドカ…
ドカ…
ドカ!!

MAY I HELP YOU?
倉田組

WE'VE CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT.
IT'S A BIT EARLY, BUT IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
HMM?
I'M SORRY TO SAY THIS, BUT..
THE HOUSE IS STILL OPEN, RIGHT?
WE'RE LOOKING TO GAM - BLE, TONIGHT.
IN LIGHT OF THAT...
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY FOR THE INCON - VEN.ENCE, BUT..
YES.
CLOSED, YOU SAY ..?
WHAT'S UP WITH HIM?
THEY CAN'T EVEN KEEP UP A SCHEDULE ..?
HEY ...!!
ペコ...
..I MUST RESPECTFULLY ASK YOU TO TAKE YOUR LEAVE
WHA ..?

EVEN AS MUCH AS I WANT TO KNOW IF IT'S HIM...
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO COME BACK SOME OTHER TIME TO ASK ABOUT...!
I GUESS WE'VE JUST GOT TO LEAVE FOR NOW...
WE CAN'T DO ANY-THING ELSE, TODAY
SO WHAT NOW?
WHAT NOW IS RIGHT...


URGH..!!

BLOOD...?!

HUH ..?
...BLOOD ..!
.....
THE MAN WHO GREETED US .. HE'S GOT BLOOD ALL OVER HIS LEG ..!!
URGH ..!!

CHAPTER 62 - FILTH
第62話 泥土

YASUOKA ...!!
YASU-OKA!!
HE... HEY, YOU!
WHOA-!
AKAGI!
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?! HEY!!

AKAGI!!!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!
WHA-?!
AH...!!
YOU, THERE! STOP THAT, RIGHT THIS INSTANT!!
YASU-OKA...!!

AKAGI
...!!

OHGI ...
WAIT!
GET HIM OUT OF HERE!!

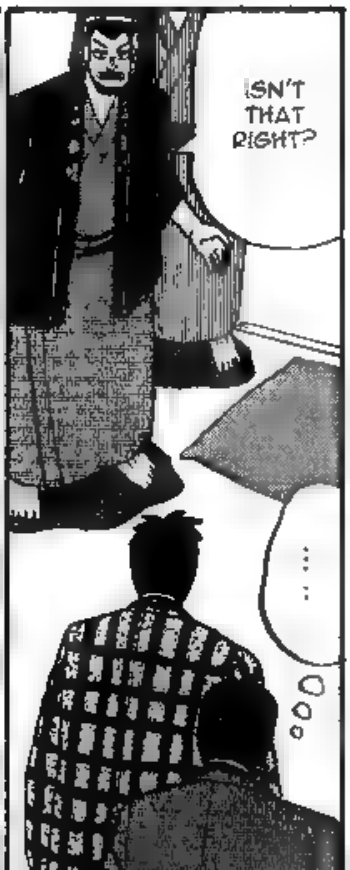
OHGI TAKESHI.
THE INADA AND KURATA GROUPS ARE BOTH SUB-SIDARIES OF THE SATOU GROUP. AND HE S THE UNDERBOSS OF INADA

YOU'RE OHGI-SAN, AREN'T YOU? IN THE BACK, THERE

I'M OHGI INDEED
LONG TIME NO SEE, KURAISHI

AND IN THAT REGARD,
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE US FOR BARGING IN SO SUDDENLY...

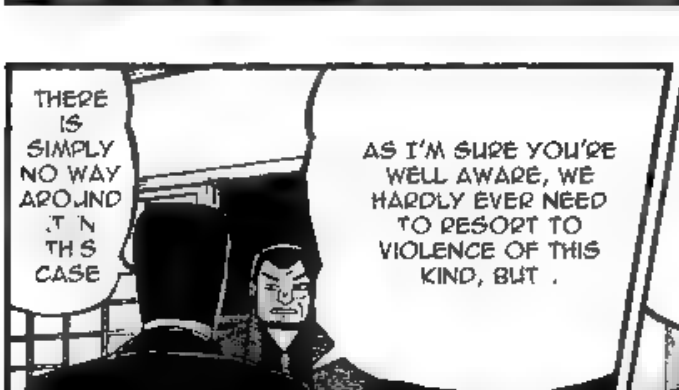
INDEED IT IS
R...


ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
...
...

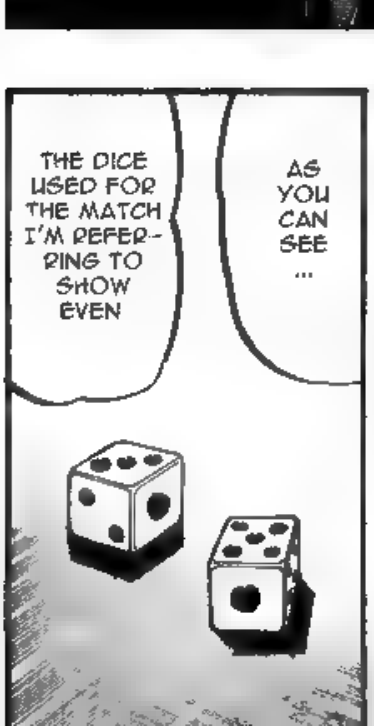
NEVER-THELESS ...

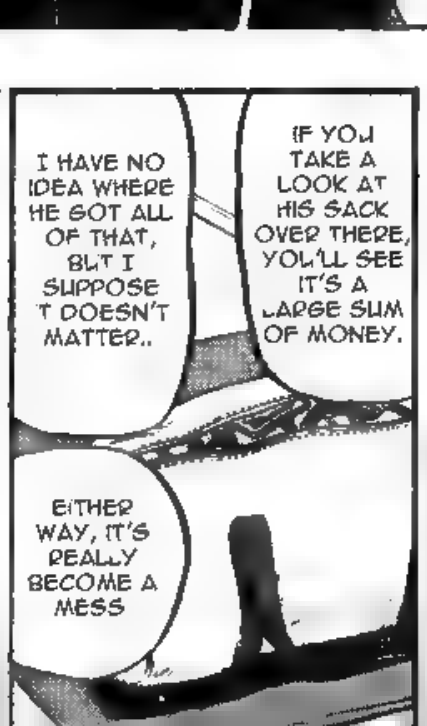
I APOLOGIZE FOR THIS, SINCERELY
AH, IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT

WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?
HEH-HEH ...


AS I'M SURE YOU'RE WELL AWARE, WE HARDLY EVER NEED TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE OF THIS KIND, BUT .
THERE IS SIMPLY NO WAY AROUND IT IN THIS CASE

AH, YES, ABOUT THAT...
IT SEEMS AS THOUGH YOU'VE CAUGHT US AT A RATHER BAD TIME

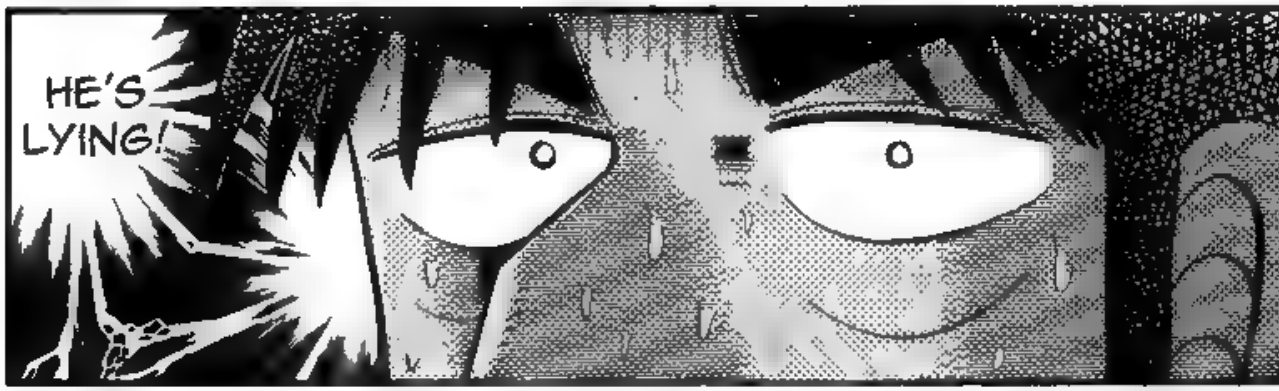

AS YOU CAN SEE ...
THE DICE USED FOR THE MATCH I'M REFERRING TO SHOW EVEN


IF YOU TAKE A LOOK AT HIS SACK OVER THERE, YOU'LL SEE IT'S A LARGE SUM OF MONEY.
I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE HE GOT ALL OF THAT, BUT I SUPPOSE IT DOESN'T MATTER..
EITHER WAY, IT'S REALLY BECOME A MESS

THIS MAN IS SIMPLY [redacted] STUBBORN!
YOU SEE, HE BET ALL THE MONEY HE HAD ON HAND ...

WHA-?!
BUT YOU SEE, THIS MAN ...
... IS TRYING TO INSIST THAT THE DICE ARE ODD INSTEAD!
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, EVERYONE?!
HEH-HEH-HEH ...
IT IS!!
Y, YES!
SINCE YOU TWO WEREN'T HERE FROM THE START, LIKE WE WERE ...
DON'T BE SURPRISED IF THIS KID, HERE ...

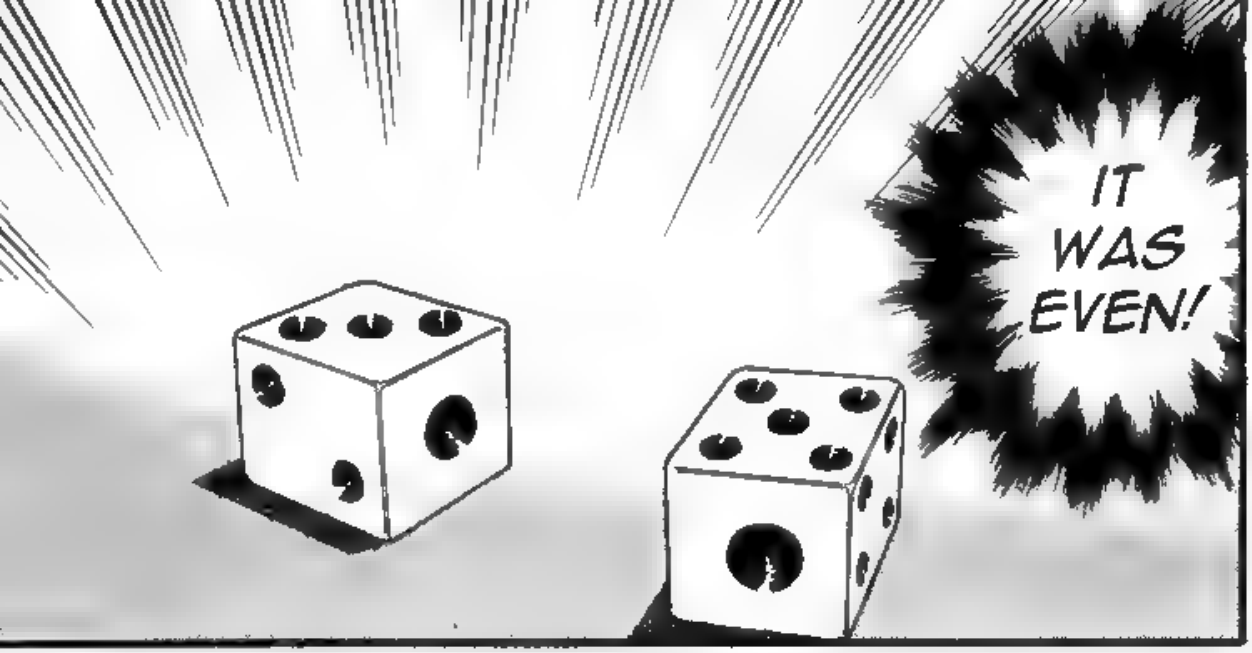
...TRIES TO CONVINCE YOU THAT THE BET HE MADE WAS ON EVEN!
JUST TAKE IT WITH A GRAIN OF SALT, IF YOU WILL.


HE'S LYING!

EVEN IF IT HAPPENED ...
..BUT HE WOULD NEVER TRY TO WORM HIS WAY OUT OF A LOSS LIKE THIS!

IT'S THE TRUTH THAT AKAGI IS A BONA FIDE SOCIAL OUTCAST ...
.. AND THAT HE TENDS TO IGNORE SOCIETAL RULES...

AKAGI'S BET WASN'T ODD AT ALL!
.. THAT HIS LIFE WERE TO DEPEND ON IT!


IT WAS EVEN!

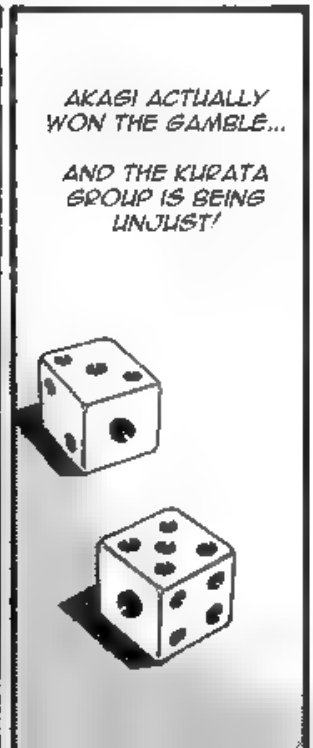
ARE THE KU-RATA GROUP...
I'M POSITIVE THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED

THE ONES WHO'RE TRYING TO TURN THE GAME AROUND TO THEIR FAVOR BY FORCE ..
AKAGI IS THE ONE BEING HONEST!

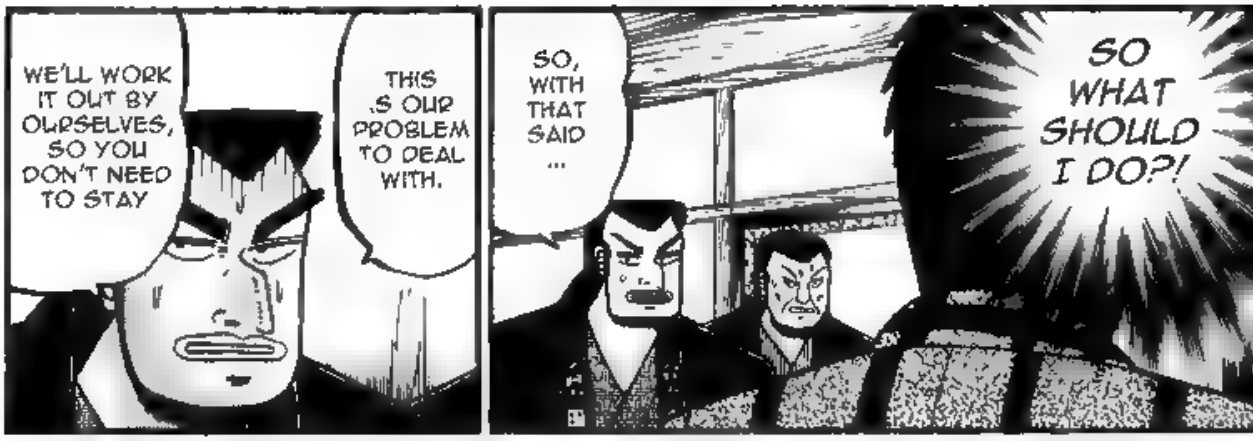
KH ...!

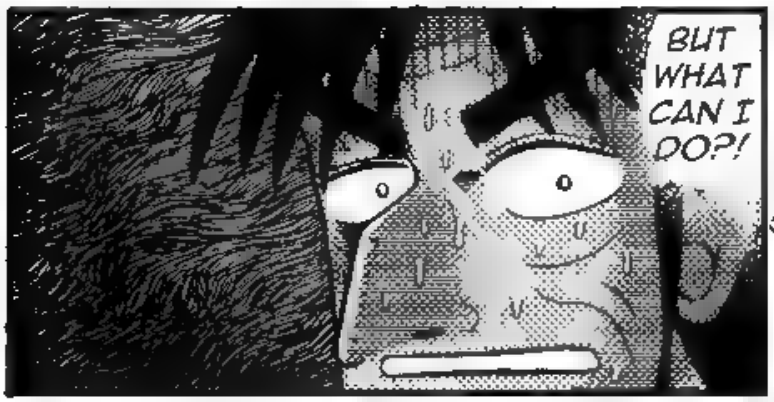
THEY CAN'T!
AT THIS RATE, THE KURATA GROUP WILL NEVER BACK DOWN FROM THEIR CLAIM ABOUT WHAT THE BET WAS

BUT ..


AKAGI ACTUALLY WON THE GAMBLE...
AND THE KURATA GROUP IS BEING UNJUST!

IT'S JUST THE WAY HE IS TO STAND STRONG UNTIL THE VERY END!
NEITHER WILL AKAGI!!
BUT, ON THE OTHER HAND
THIS HAS GOTTEN TO A POINT WHERE THEY WILL NEVER BACK DOWN!

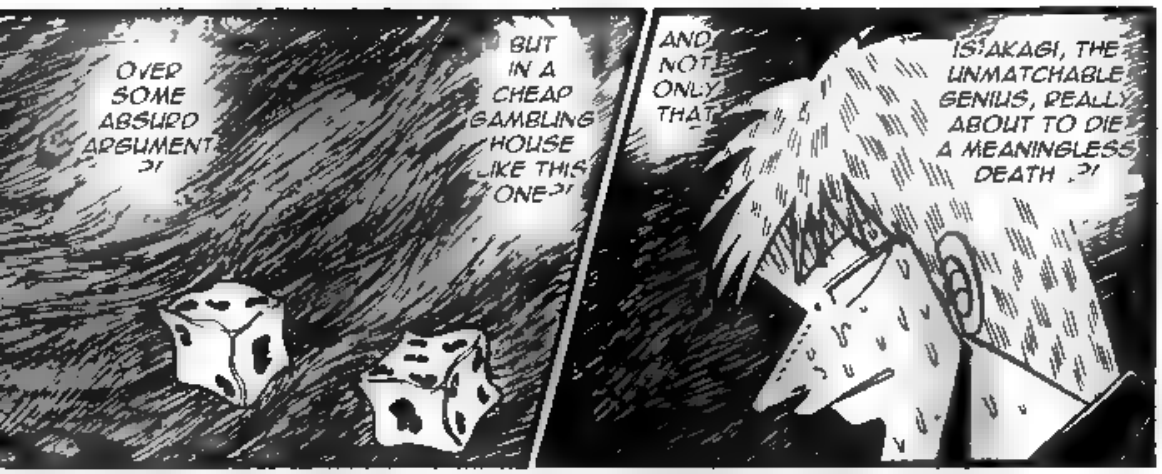




I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!

WITHOUT A DOUBT..
A MEANINGLESS DEATH!
IF I LET THINGS RUN THEIR COURSE NOW, THEN THE RESULT WILL BE WHAT AKAGI CALLED THE ESSENCE OF GAMBLING..

DEATH ...?!


OVER SOME ABSURD ARGUMENT ?!
BUT IN A CHEAP GAMBLING HOUSE LIKE THIS ONE?!
AND NOT ONLY THAT
IS AKAGI, THE UNMATCHABLE GENIUS, REALLY ABOUT TO DIE A MEANINGLESS DEATH ?!

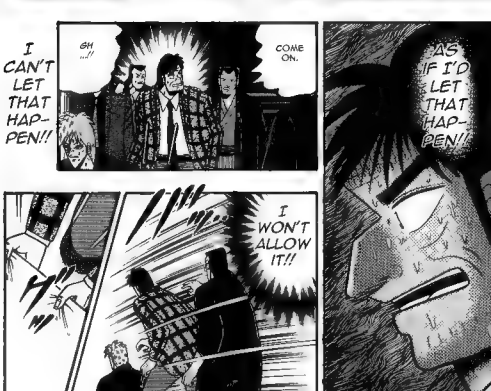
NO WAY!!

NO WAY!!

WILL HE VANISH OFF THE EARTH JUST LIKE THAT?!
LIKE A PRICE-LESS JEM SINKING INTO THE MUD ??
IS IT POS-SIBLE FOR HIM TO SINK AWAY JUST LIKE THAT?!

THERE'S JUST NO WAY!!

YASU-OKA ...!!
YAAAAAA AAUUUUU GGHHH!!
THE DICE ARE NO MORE!!
WHAT IS-?!


I CAN'T LET THAT HAP-PEN!!
GH ...!!
COME ON.
I WON'T ALLOW IT!!
AS IF I'D LET THAT HAP-PEN!!

THERE'S NO WAY TO TELL WHAT THEY WERE, NOW!
NO ONE CAN SAY IF THEY WERE EVEN OR ODD, NOW!!
WHAT EVERYONE HERE WAS PUTTING THEIR LIVES AND PRIDE ON THE LINE FOR...

T/N: DAIGASHI THE YAKUZA POSITION IN CHARGE OF A GAMBLING HOUSE, WORKING FOR THE BOSS DIRECTLY

YASUOKA IS MY COMRADE ...
I CAN'T JUST STAND IDLY BY!
THAT IS NOT TRUE!
YOU CALM DOWN!!
YOU'RE NOT PART OF THIS!
OHGI-SAN ...?!
PLEASE CALM DOWN, SIR!

THAT IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU CONTINUE AS YOU ARE!
...YOU TURN AGAINST THE WHOLE INADA GROUP!
AND IF YOU TURN AGAINST OHGI TAKESHI ...
TURNING AGAINST YASUOKA, AND BY EXTENSION AGAINST AKAGI, WILL BE THE SAME THING AS TURNING AGAINST MYSELF!

AS THAT VERY SAME OHGI OF THE INADA GROUP, I STAND HERE AND BOW MY HEAD TO YOU!
DAI-GASHI!
OHGI ..!

WHA...
WHAT A STUPID THING TO SAY!!
...AND GO BACK TO THE WAY THINGS WERE BEFORE THIS MESS STARTED?!
SO CAN WE NOT ACT AS THOUGH IT NEVER HAPPENED ...
THIS BATTLE CAN GO NOWHERE, NOW.

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO!
YOU KNOW FULL WELL THAT WE CAN'T DO THAT!!!

SO STOP TRYING TO FORCE IT!
AND BECAUSE OF THAT, NO ONE CAN POSSIBLY WIN THE BATTLE!

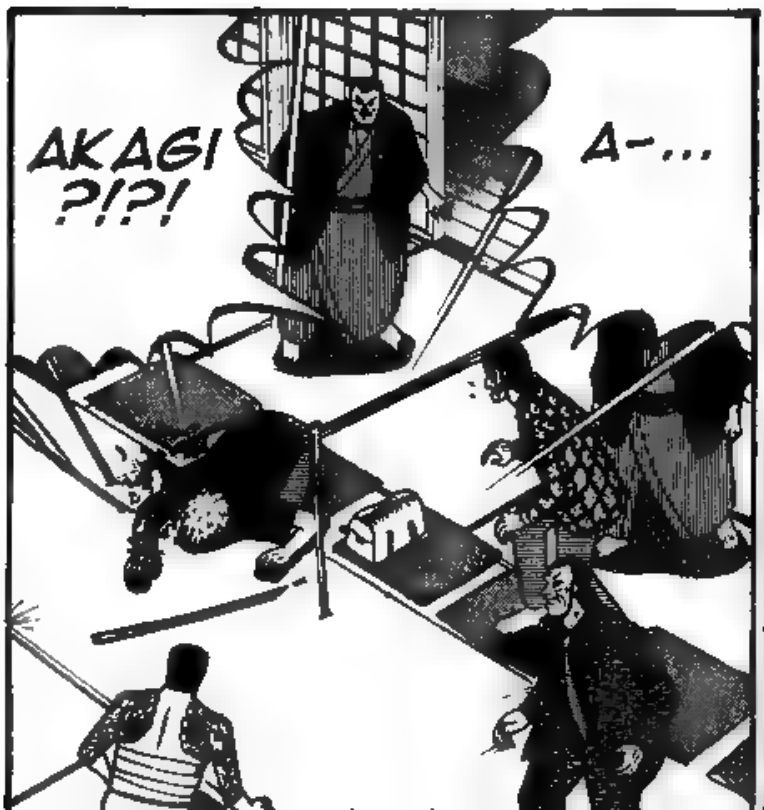
...BUT NO ONE CAN DEFINITIVELY PROVE WHAT THE OUT-COME WAS!
THE DICE'S ROLL HAS BEEN KNOCKED AWAY, SO ARGUE ALL YOU LIKE ...

.. I WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO REPORT IT TO MY SU-PERIORS!
IF YOU INSIST ON CONTINUING TO FIGHT THIS BATTLE LOCKED N A PERMANENT STALEMATE...

AM I WRONG ...?
..THAT IN ITSELF WOULD BE A SEVERE SHAME TO THE KURATA GROUP, IF NOTHING ELSE! I'M SURE YOU DON'T WANT THAT!
...IF THEY HEAR OF HOW BADLY YOU HANDLED THIS CONFLICT...
AND YOU SEE, IF MY SUPERIORS CATCH WORD OF ALL THIS ...

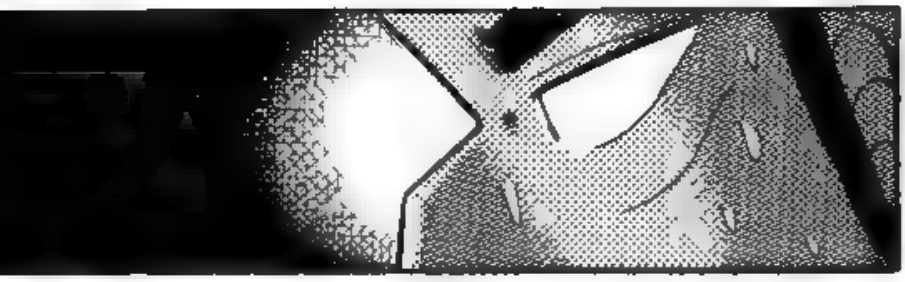
WELL?! AM I ?!

TCH ...


AKAGI ?!?!
A-...

ド…ド…

AKAGI!!!!!



.....
HEH-
HEH
...

.....
HOW
WAS HE
...?!
HOW
...

NO PROBLEMS AT ALL.

WHEW ...
HEH - HEH ...

REALLY ..?
...
THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, NOW.

JUST AS LONG AS IT STOPS BLEE-DING
FROM JUST THAT WOUND, HE WON'T BE DYING ANY TIME SOON ...

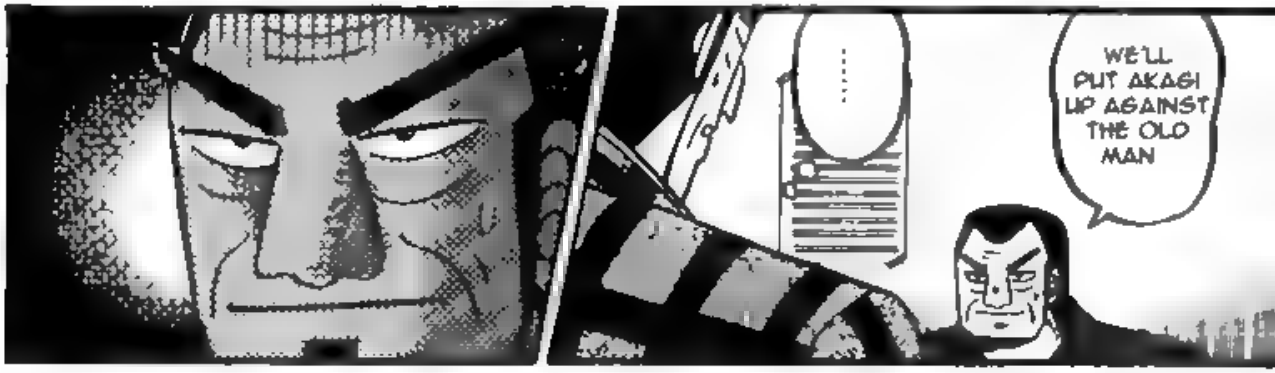
...
I GUESS NO ONE EVER TAUGHT HIM WHEN TO PUT ON THE BRAKES.

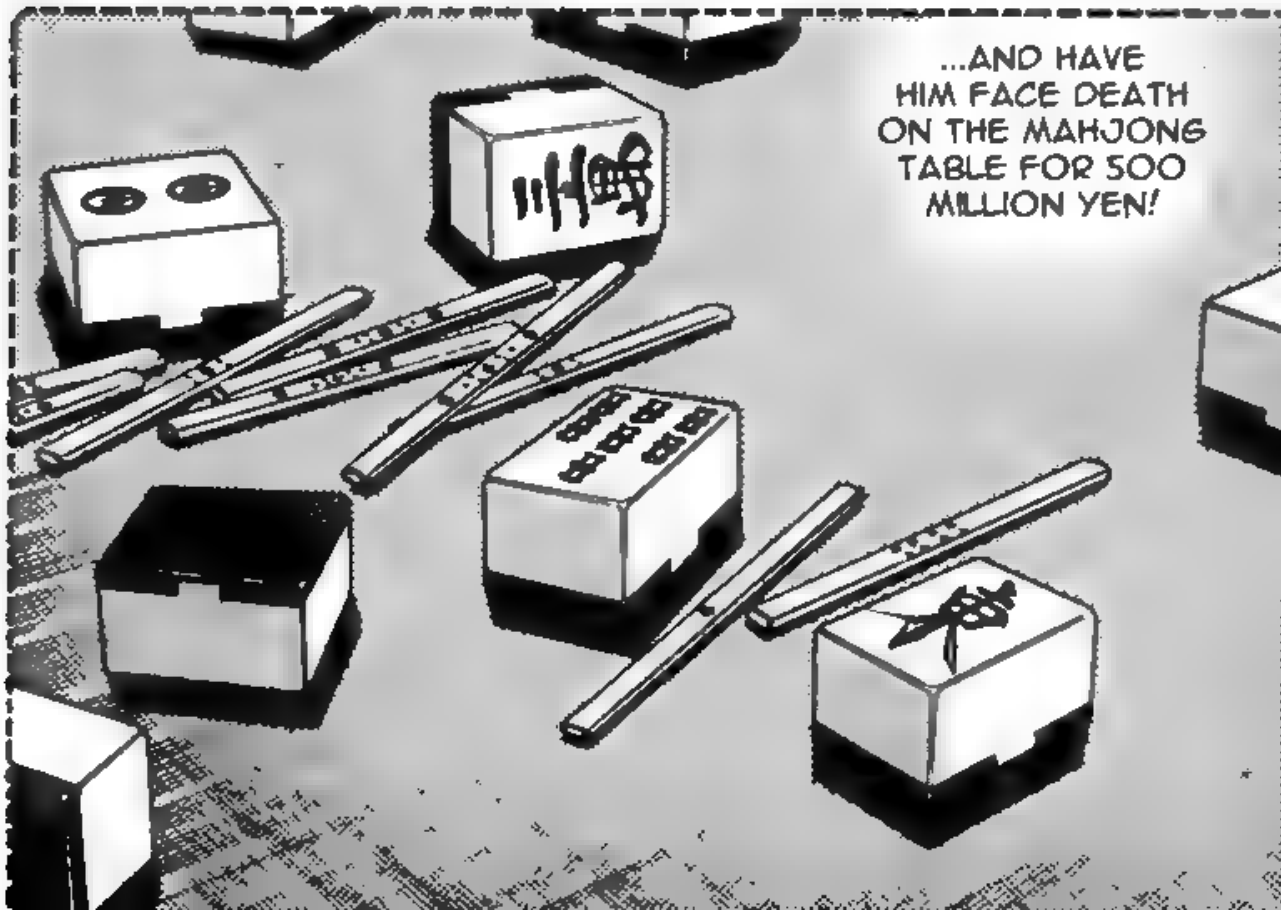
IF WE HADN'T SHOWN UP RIGHT WHEN WE DID, HE REALLY WOULD HAVE DIED IN THAT FILTHY PLACE.

THAT SURE WAS A CLOSE CALL, THOUGH.
...
C

INSTEAD OF LOOKING FOR CHEAP SHOTS OF ADRENALINE ...
. FROM COMING IN A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH DEATH ...
IF IT'S AKAGI, THE OLD MAN MIGHT NOT BE TOTALLY UNBEATABLE, AFTER ALL!
I'M STARTING TO SEE IT, NOW ...
THAT MAN IS NOT AT ALL AFRAID OF DEATH.
YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT HIM, BEFORE.
.....
...HE ACTUALLY LOOKS DEATH STRAIGHT IN THE EYES, WITHOUT FLINCHING!
...I JUST COULDN'T LET HIM DIE LIKE THAT!
DON'T YOU AGREE?
AKAGI ...
HE'S AN IRREPLACABLE TALENT.
AND BE-CAUSE OF THAT .
...IS REALLY SOME-THING SPECIAL.
THAT TYPE OF MAN ...

WHAT DO YOU SAY WE GIVE IT A SHOT?
IN ORDER TO HAVE A SHOT AT GETTING THE WHOLE 500 MILLION RIGHT BEFORE OUR EYES .
THAT 500 MILLION YEN SHIELD IS NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT, BUT IT MIGHT NOT BE IM-PASSABLE, AFTER ALL!
THIS 500 MILLION IN 1965 WOULD EQUATE TO ABOUT 5 BILLION TODAY
THE OLD MAN'S MASSIVE WALL OF MONEY
HEH-HEH


.....
WE'LL PUT AKAGI UP AGAINST THE OLD MAN


...AND HAVE HIM FACE DEATH ON THE MAHJONG TABLE FOR 500 MILLION YEN!

CHAPTER 63 - MEANINGLESS

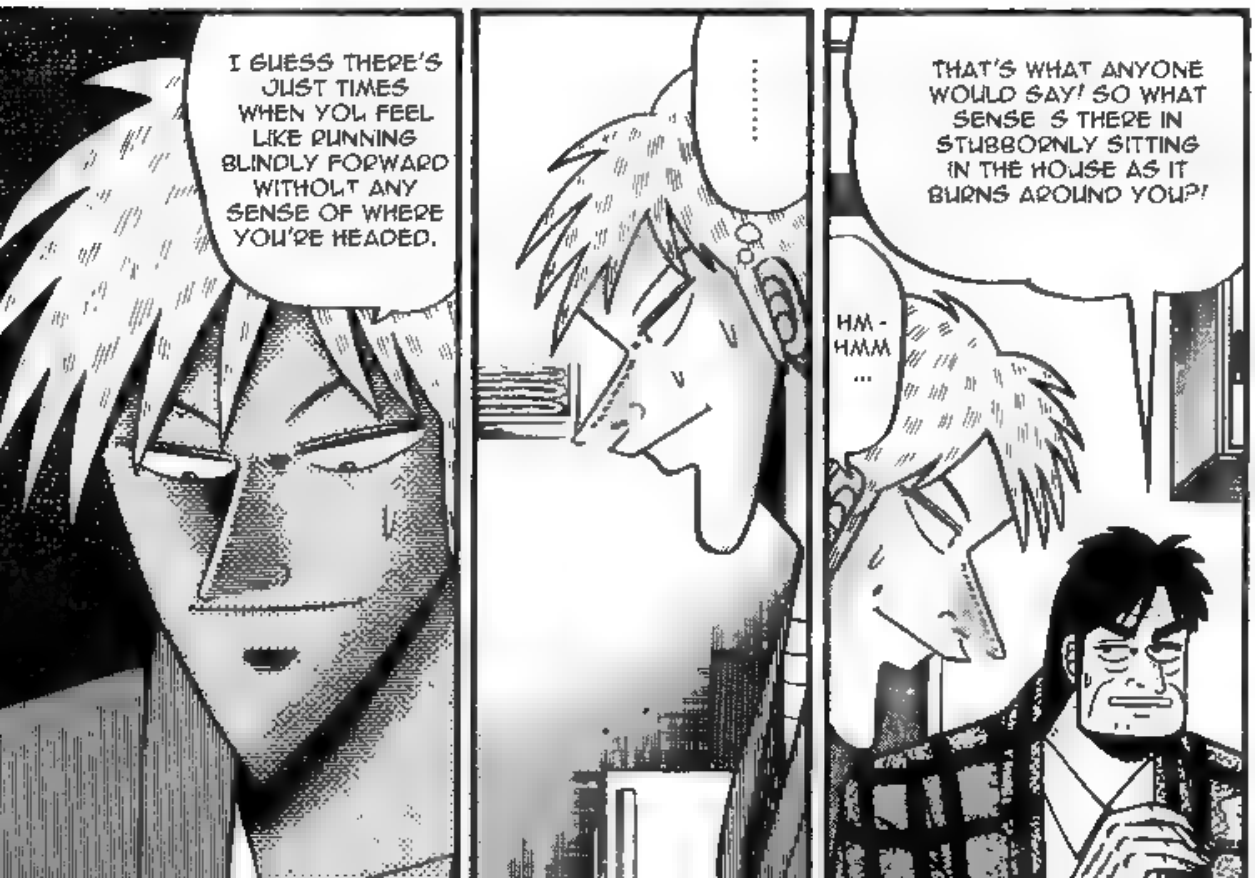
第63話 犬死

HAH-HAH ...
I HEARD THAT NONE OF YOUR NERVES WERE SEVERED.
YOU CAN MOVE YOUR HAND, NOW, CAN'T YOU?
IT'S REALLY LUCKY THAT WASN'T A VERY SERIOUS INJURY YOU GOT, THERE.
YOU KNOW ...

PROMISE ME THAT YOU'LL NEVER TRY TO THROW YOUR LIFE AWAY SO EASILY LIKE THAT, AGAIN!
MAKE ME A PROMISE, HERE
EVEN SO, THOUGH ...
THERE WAS NO LONGER ANYTHING THAT YOU COULD DO TO STOP THEM IT WAS ABSOLUTELY DISGRACEFUL ...
. AND INSANE.
ONCE THEY BROUGHT SWORDS INTO IT AND STARTED HACKING AWAY AT YOUR SHOULDER...
THEY WOULD WIN THE GAME, THROUGH FORCE IF NECES - SARY.
IT DIDN'T MATTER WHETHER THE OUT - COME OF THE DICE WERE ODD OR EVEN ..
YOU JUST CAN'T REASON WITH A GROUP OF LUNATICS LIKE THAT.
ALTHOUGH, I SUPPOSE I CAN UNDER - STAND ...
THAT WOULD SEEM TO ME LIKE COMMON SENSE.
NO MATTER WHAT YOU TRY TO DO, YOU WILL STILL FAIL
AGAINST SUCH A LARGE GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD STOP AT NOTHING TO GET WHAT THEY WANT

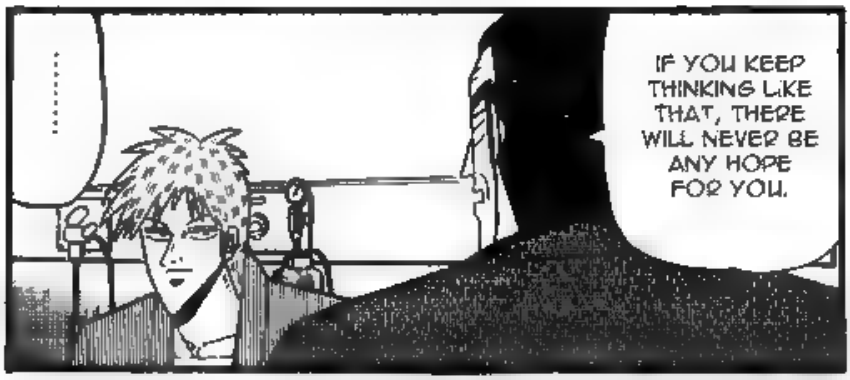
THINK ABOUT IT LIKE THIS.
IN FACT, THE WAY IT REALLY PANS OUT IS QUITE THE OPPO - SITE!
BUT THE TRUTH IS, THAT'S NOT HOW IT IS AT ALL!
. THAT, ON THE SURFACE, IT M GHT SEEM LIKE RUNNING AWAY

IF YOUR HOUSE IS BURNING TO THE GROUND ...
..YOU HAVE TO GET OUT OF IT!
..YOU HAVE TO GET AWAY FROM IT!
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO GET BITTEN BY A RABID DOG ...


I GUESS THERE'S JUST TIMES WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE RUNNING BLINDLY FORWARD WITHOUT ANY SENSE OF WHERE YOU'RE HEADED.
.....
THAT'S WHAT ANYONE WOULD SAY! SO WHAT SENSE S THERE IN STUBBORNLY SITTING IN THE HOUSE AS IT BURNS AROUND YOU?!
HM - HMM ...

AND ONCE I'D GOTTEN TO THAT POINT.
THE MORE SURE I FELT THAT I COULDN'T COMPRO-MISE.
THE MORE BLOOD POURED OUT OF MY BODY ...
THAT'S THE KIND OF FEELING THAT I HAD BACK THEN.
...AND BE SATISFIED WITH THAT.
I FELT LIKE I COULD DIE WITH MY PRIDE ...
IT'S EASY TO SEE THAT MUCH NOW THAT WE'RE QUIETLY RECOLLECTING ON WHAT HAPPENED.
IT WAS PRETTY STUPID TO JUST SIT UNMOVING AND FEEL THE HOUSE BURN DOWN AROUND ME ...
I SUP-POSE ...
...

THOSE WERE JUST EMPTY WORDS.
...AKAGI..!
.....
. THAT'S AS FAR AS I AGREE WITH WHAT YOU SAID, YASUOKA-SAN
BUT THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS...
.....
YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER THIS UNTIL YOU TRY AND SEE
WHAT'S REALLY THE POINT OF CONTINUING TO GO ON ONCE YOU'VE LOST YOUR PRIDE?
. IT'S FINE TO JUST LAY DOWN AND DIE.
YOU'RE WRONG!
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO THE ONE TAKING YOUR LIFE IS...
ALL I'M SAYING IS THAT, WHEN THE TIME COMES TO DIE, IT'S FINE TO LET GO OF RATIONALITY
IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOUR TIME OF DEATH IS ABOUT TO COME TO PASS ...


.....
IF YOU KEEP THINKING LIKE THAT, THERE WILL NEVER BE ANY HOPE FOR YOU.

YOU CAN GET FURTHER IN LIFE THAN YOU MIGHT THINK JUST BY CONTINUING TO LIVE!

BUT, IN THE END, YOU JUST FIZZLE OUT IN THE AIR
YOU'RE LIKE A CRAZY FIREWORK, GOING THIS WAY AND THAT, SENDING SPARKS STREAMING ALL OVER THE SKY.

A THIRD-RATE WAY TO LIVE
.....
THAT WOULD BE YOUR ENTIRE LIFE .
...A LIFE LED BY NOTHING BUT YOUR GIVEN TALENT!
MAKE MORE OF YOURSELF, AKAGI!
WHY DON'T YOU USE THAT TALENT TO BUILD MORE?
YOU CAN HAVE THE WORLD AS YOUR DOMAIN!
IF YOU USE THAT TALENT AS THE FOUNDATION AND BUILD ON TOP OF IT .
YOU CAN REALLY CONQUER THE WORLD!

HEH-
HEH
...
.....

...
OOO

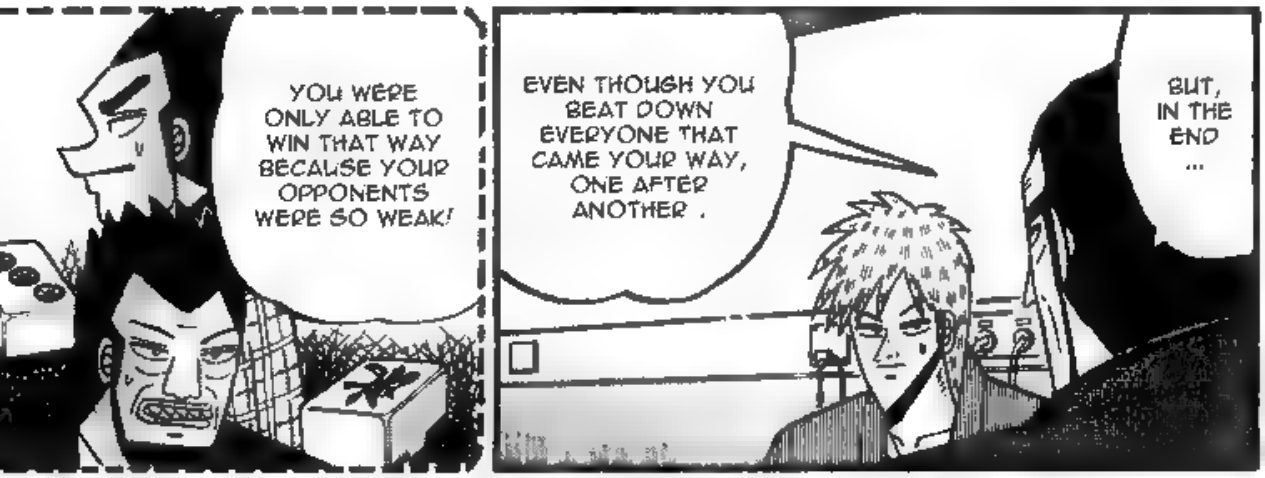
NOT
INTERESTED.

NOW,
NOW,
DON'T
SAY
THAT!

EVERYONE IN THIS WORLD OF OURS...
...IS LOOKING TO PUSH THEMSELVES UP HIGHER.
THAT'S EVERYBODY'S ULTIMATE ASPIRATION. THEIR GREATEST HOPE.
THEIR DEAREST WISH, IF YOU WILL.
AND YET ...
IN GENERAL, THE FACT REMAINS ...
.. WHAT THEY END UP ACCOMPLISHING STOPS RIGHT THERE
THEY ARE SHUT OFF FROM EVER REACHING THEIR GOAL.
...
WHEN IT COMES TO THAT, YOU REALLY STAND ABOVE ALL THE REST.
YOU HAVE A GLOW ABOUT YOU THAT THEY CAN NEVER HOPE TO GAIN FOR THEMSELVES
NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY STRUGGLE FOR IT, THEY CAN NEVER OBTAIN THAT LIGHT THAT YOU HAVE!
BUT EVEN STILL ...
...YOU'RE SAYING THAT YOU'D BE OKAY WITH A MEANINGLESS DEATH TO THAT TRASH?!
GIVE ME A FUCKING BREAK!

YOU COMPLETELY IGNORED THE FACT THAT YOU MEANT NOTHING TO THEM!
WHAT YOU DID WAS NOT ONLY STUPID, BUT EXTREMELY ARROGANT!
.....
THAT DOESN'T FIT YOU IN THE LEAST!
BUT WHAT YOU DID..
IT'S ABSOLUTELY FINE TO CURSE THE GROUP UNDER YOUR BREATH!
BUT IN REALITY, THAT'S NOT HOW IT IS IN THE LEAST!
YOU MAY HAVE FELT LIKE YOU WERE THAT CALLOUS SINCE THEY FIRST MET YOU.
YOU MORONICALLY FOUGHT TO THE DEATH FOR YOUR MONEY!
..WAS ACT AS THOUGH YOU WERE EQUAL TO THEM!
IT'S JUST THAT YOU OPERATE WITH NOTHING BUT THAT TALENT!
THAT IS PART OF YOUR TALENT!
AND THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS...
YOU PUT ON A DISPLAY OF BEING EITHER CALM OR ARROGANT AS THE NEED AROSE..
THOSE ACTIONS AREN'T JUST PART OF BEING AN INEXPERIENCED YOUTH, THOUGH THEY CERTAINLY THOUGHT SO
A SORT OF MASK.

.YOU'VE MANAGED TO WIN EVERY GAMBLE YOU'VE TAKEN PART IN
AND WITH JUST THAT TALENT ALONE..
.....


YOU WERE ONLY ABLE TO WIN THAT WAY BECAUSE YOUR OPPONENTS WERE SO WEAK!
EVEN THOUGH YOU BEAT DOWN EVERYONE THAT CAME YOUR WAY, ONE AFTER ANOTHER .
BUT, IN THE END ...

ANY KIND OF MEANINGLESS DEATH WOULD BE FINE BY YOU S WHAT YOU SAY . BUT IF IT WEREN'T FOR THOSE EASY OPPONENTS, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE THAT MINDSET!
I'D HAZARD A GUESS ...
THAT IS WHY YOU HAVE GROWN SO BORED WITH LIFE!
TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, YOU WERE ONLY PLAYING AGAINST EASY OPPONENTS TO BEAT THIS WHOLE TIME.
AND THUS ...

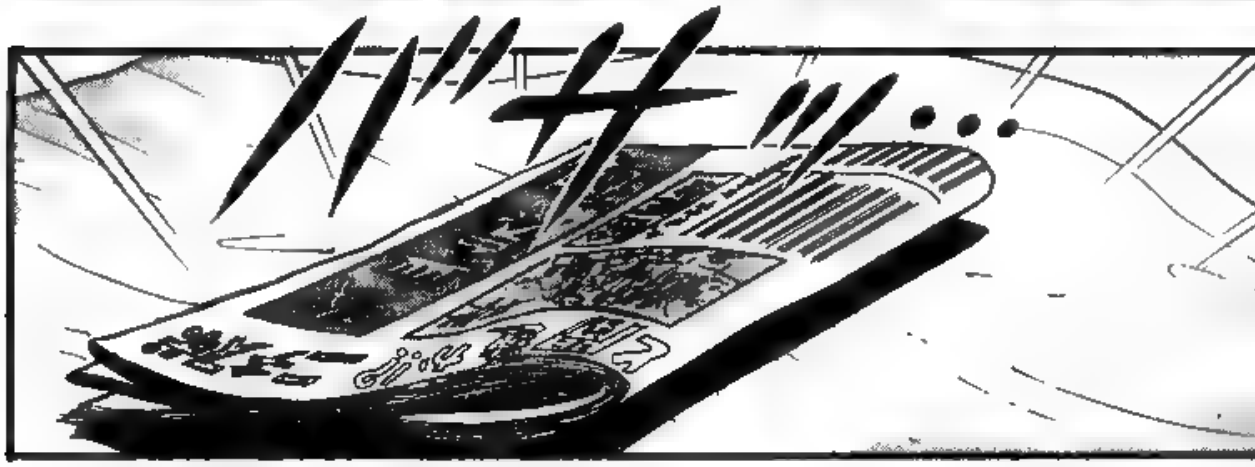
...THAT YOU FELT AS THOUGH YOU WERE IN LUKEWARM WATER.
LEAVE YOU STUCK TO THE BOTTOM OF THE PAN!
SOMETHING THAT WILL BURN YOU TO YOUR VERY CORE ...GIVE YOU THE SENSATION OF ROASTING...
WHAT YOU NEED ...
A LIFE THAT GOES BEYOND WHAT NORMAL PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH!
YOU WANT SOMETHING LIKE BOILING WATER THAT NORMAL PEOPLE CAN'T SO MUCH AS GET CLOSE TO.
AKAGI ...
...IS A WORTHY OPPO-NENT!
.....
THAT IS, THAT EVERYTHING UP TO THIS POINT HAS BEEN FAR TOO DULL FOR YOU!
...ISN'T JUST TO LAY DOWN AND DIE
DEEP DOWN BENEATH THE SURFACE, WHAT YOU WANT...
HEH-HEH ...

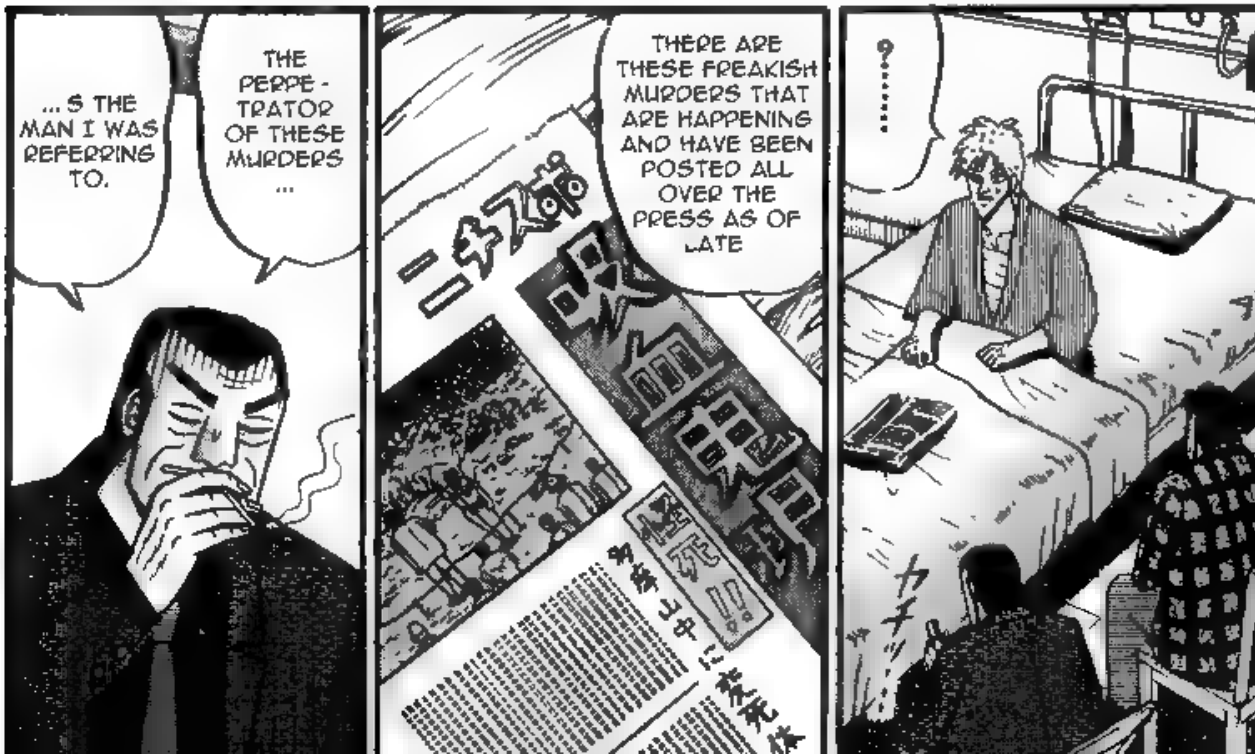
I KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN GIVE YOU THE THRILL YOU'RE AFTER!

HMM-
HMM-
HM...

.....

SURE.
LET HIM SEE IT.




... S THE MAN I WAS REFERRING TO.
THE PERPE - TRATOR OF THESE MURDERS ...
THERE ARE THESE FREAKISH MURDERS THAT ARE HAPPENING AND HAVE BEEN POSTED ALL OVER THE PRESS AS OF LATE
?.....
カチッ!

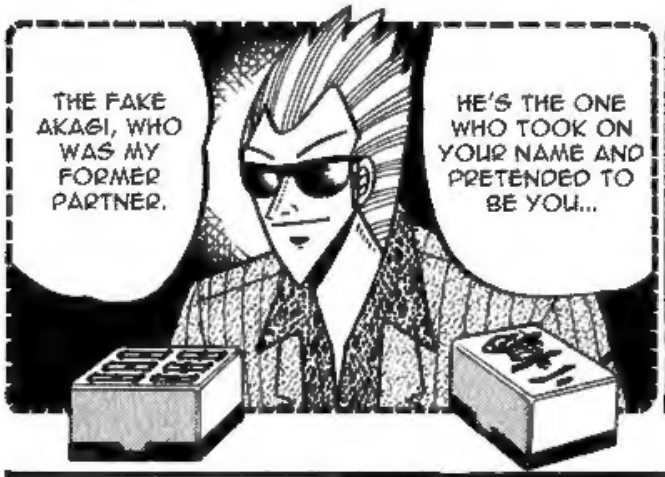
HE WILL BE YOUR OPPONENT!

...IS A MAN CALLED "HIRAYAMA", WHO I'M SURE YOU KNOW.
THE CORPSE MENTIONED IN THERE THAT WAS FOUND IN THE TAMA MOUNTAINS ...

AND, AS EVEN MORE REASON ...
.....

REALLY ..?

THIS IS HIM.
I DON'T KNOW IF IT MEANS ANYTHING TO YOU, BUT...


THE FAKE AKAGI, WHO WAS MY FORMER PARTNER.
HE'S THE ONE WHO TOOK ON YOUR NAME AND PRETENDED TO BE YOU...

THAT'S RIGHT.
THIS IS... HE WAS...

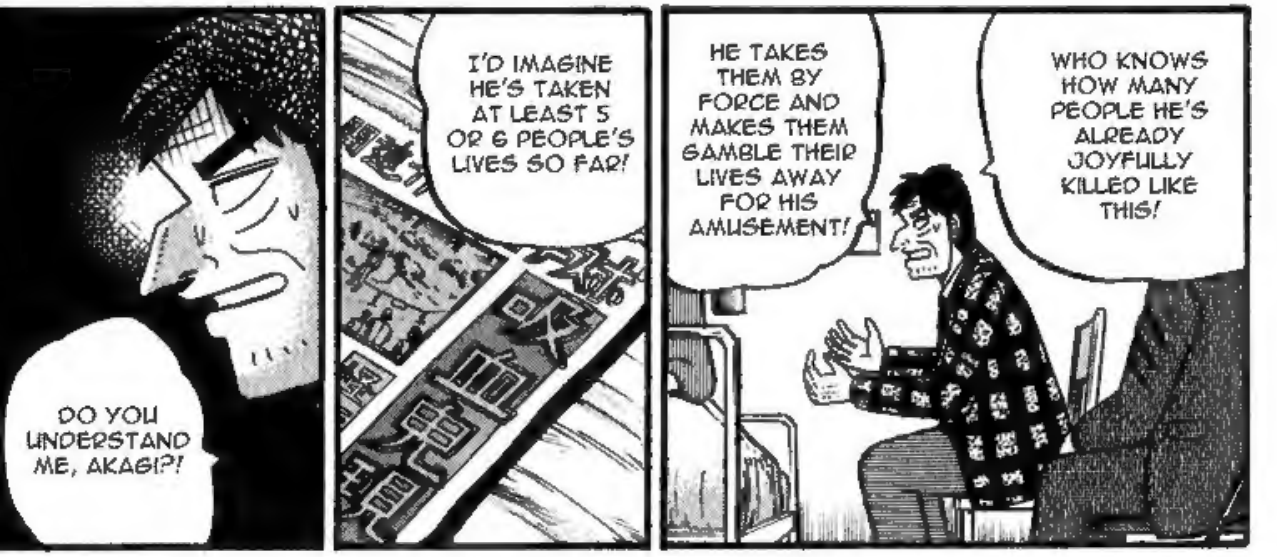
...HE WAS FORCED INTO IT.
I'D GUESS ...

HIRAYAMA WAS NOT THE TYPE OF MAN TO TAKE SUCH HUGE RISKS AS THIS.
AS I'M SURE YOU GATHERED FROM HIM ...

THE RESULT... WAS THIS WHOLE MESS.

...MADE HIM BET IT IN A HIGH-STAKES GAME OF MAHJONG.
THE MURDERER WHO TOOK HIS LIFE...

IT'S NOT JUST HIRAYAMA ...
HUNT HIM DOWN!
... AKAGI!


DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, AKAGI?!
I'D IMAGINE HE'S TAKEN AT LEAST 5 OR 6 PEOPLE'S LIVES SO FAR!
HE TAKES THEM BY FORCE AND MAKES THEM GAMBLE THEIR LIVES AWAY FOR HIS AMUSEMENT!
WHO KNOWS HOW MANY PEOPLE HE'S ALREADY JOYFULLY KILLED LIKE THIS!

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN!
PUT A STOP TO THIS MONSTER ONCE AND FOR ALL, AKAGI!!
YOU ARE AIMING TO TAKE DOWN THIS MAN-EATING TIGER WHO IS ON THE LOOSE!
THIS TIME AROUND, IT'S NOT JUST A MATTER OF MONEY!
THIS IS A HUNT!

吸血鬼現わる
若者失踪事件と関連か!?
二名人
怪死!!
アカギ7／完
AKAGI 7 - FIN

近代麻雀コミックス
アカギ⑦
1997年8月10日初版発行

著　者●福本伸行 ©NOBUYUKI FUKUMOTO
発行者●高橋一平
発行所●㈱竹書房
東京都千代田区飯田橋2－7－3
電話　03(3264)1576
振替　00170-2-179210
印刷所●暁印刷株式会社

乱丁・落丁本はおとりかえいたします。
定価はカバーに表示してあります。
TAKE SHOBO　Printed in Japan.